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THE INDEPENDENT

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TODAY'S NEWS

Police gas kills

Police forces have been warned to think again about using CS spray. An inquest jury has declared a man who died after being sprayed was unlawfully killed. This questions the safety of the spray and could lead to the policemen who used it being prosecuted. Page 4

Pets may travel

Pets coming home from abroad may no longer have to spend six months in quarantine. They could be issued with their own passports by the end of next year, the Labour Conference was told yesterday. In another speech, Jack Straw announced that the courts will be forced to be tougher on racist crimes. Page 6

Saudi murder mystery

As the two British nurses continue to protest their innocence of the murder of Yvonne Gilford, details of a similar killing at the same Saudi hospital have emerged. The other death shared some of the features and neither accused nurse was there at the time. In each case a security guard "went missing" afterwards. Page 3

Green America

The US, home of the gas-guzzler, is under pressure to cut carbon emissions before world leaders meet in Kyoto for a global climate treaty. President Clinton agrees. But car-makers and oil companies are fighting back in a ferocious struggle which means America might, in the end, fail to back the treaty. Page 16

Hurry up, say French

France now wants a "clear signal" about whether Britain will join the single currency. It hopes to get it on Monday when the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, visits Paris. But France, and the other EU countries, will probably have to wait a little longer. Page 15

Girls' fight KO'd

A 13-year-old girl due to take part in the first legal all-female boxing match has pulled out. There had been an outcry from boxers, commentators, and doctors. Emma Brammer's parents blamed media pressure: Emma herself isn't going to give up boxing. Page 8

BT's silent huff

British Telecom has spurned the offer of talks with WorldCom, its US rival. WorldCom's surprise \$30bn takeover bid for MCI, which BT had hoped to swallow up, has left the British company reeling. BT said it didn't want to talk until MCI had decided whether to accept or reject the new bid. Page 23.

Captain is out

Roy Keane, the Manchester United captain is out for the rest of the season after damaging ligaments in his right knee during Saturday's clash with Leeds. So will the club be looking around for a star replacement? No, Alex Ferguson, the manager, says he is confident Keane will make a full recovery. Sport, Pages 30, 32

ISM

Che Guevara as you've never seen him - only in Saturday's magazine

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A slaughter of girls: India acts to end the scandal of its missing 40m women



But where are her sisters? On page 5 Peter Popham reports about why the Indian government has decided to try to bribe families to keep girls, rather than aborting them or killing them after birth. There is now a huge gap between surviving boys and girls: 40-50m women are "missing" from the sub-continent photograph Jack Wilson/Robert Harding

Next: the end of our free health service?

A winter crisis looms in hospitals across the country as a groundswell of opinion grows behind the idea of charging patients for their treatment. Yesterday, doctors' leaders began to 'think the unthinkable'.

Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, asks if we are looking at the end of free care by the NHS.

Britain's doctors will next week peer over the precipice and contemplate the prospect of a National Health Service for which patients have to pay.

Pay for visits to the doctor, "hotel charges" for patients to cover the cost of bed and board in hospitals, and charges to prescription charges. We may also end up paying for other services such as X-rays, hospital tests and immunisations.

Sandy Macara, British Medical Association chairman, said yesterday that as the NHS moved on to a "war-footing" to cope with the expected surge in emergencies this winter, NHS trusts were already stopping routine surgery. "We don't like doing it [considering the introduction of charges] but we have to think the unthinkable in what is clearly a crisis situation," he said.

The council of the BMA has approved a report, to be published next week, which examines in detail the impact of charging patients, including the level at which fees might be set, what they would cost to collect and what they could be expected to raise. The controversial document, which would undermine a founding principle of the NHS if implemented, comes

as health experts say charging may be the least unacceptable way of bridging the funding gap between what the NHS needs and what the Government, through tax revenues, can afford to pay.

The findings of the report are likely to be seized on by Treasury ministers who are conducting a comprehensive review of Government spending which is examining charging among other measures for raising extra funds. Last June, Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, refused to rule out the possibility of new NHS charges although he later insisted that any proposal from the review would have to meet Labour's manifesto commitment that access to the NHS

Evidence from a survey of 24 OECD countries shows that the UK imposes among the lowest charges for basic medical care in the western world. Only Canada, Spain and Greece share the UK's reluctance to make patients pay.

Jennifer Dixon, a health policy analyst at the Kings Fund, the independent think-tank, said the survey showed that even egalitarian nations with publicly funded health systems such as the Scandinavian countries charged more than the UK.

In Norway, it cost the equivalent of \$11 US dollars to see a GP, \$16 to see a specialist and \$11 for an X-ray at the time of the survey in 1993. Patients paid 25 per cent of the cost of drugs up to a maximum of \$43. Similar charges were levied in Sweden and Finland.

Dr Dixon said: "We are quite unusual here. But why penalise the sick when taxes are cheap to collect? It would be inefficient and unfair."

Professor Chris Ham, director of the Health Services Management Centre at Birmingham University, said imposing patient charges would be highly sensitive and very unpopular but it had to be part of the debate about the future funding of health care. "The challenge for the Government would be how to reconcile charging with its stated intent to reduce health inequalities and increase access for the poor and chronically sick," he said.

Yesterday, the BMA said its official policy remained against charging. However, at the annual conference of GPs last June one in three voted in favour of charges.

"We are a democratic organisation and it will be for our members to tell us what they think," said Mr Macara. "I cannot believe we would change our position but we might be forced to do so."

BY JEREMY LAURANCE

would be based on need and not ability to pay.

Experts point out that charging has already been introduced for dental care, eye tests and long term care for the elderly - all of which are now largely paid for by patients - with little public protest. Although raising funds through taxation is the cheapest and simplest option it is widely seen as politically impossible.

The idea of imposing new NHS charges was floated in a report, *Healthcare 2000*, chaired by former NHS chief executive Sir Duncan Nichol, published in 1995. Although widely criticised at the time, senior members of the Audit Commission, the NHS watchdog, now privately believe that charging may be the only way for the NHS to make ends meet.

Zinfandel?
Wasn't he an Astronaut?



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ators.

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The British nurses in Saudi Arabia were offered hope after the revelation that a similar murder took place at the same hospital in 1994. Speculation mounted that the same person may have been responsible for both.

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Birmingham is to be the site of Britain's second-tallest skyscraper as part of a £300m scheme, developers disclosed.

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Britain's quarantine laws are to be reformed under a government green paper published yesterday. The six-month stay in kennels required by current legislation would be replaced by "pet passports" and vaccinations.

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The resignation of Lord Gowrie as Arts Council chairman has thrown the future of the organisation into doubt.

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After a week of news management and damage limitation, Anthony Bevins, Political Editor, analyses the role of the spin-doctor at the Labour Conference.

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The Israeli Army is losing its war against pro-Iranian Hizbollah guerrillas north of its border with Lebanon. More than 100 suspected collaborators with Israel have been seized by Hizbollah in the past 12 months, while both sides are using increasingly sophisticated weaponry.

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Brewers and pubs are secretly pumping air into beer, claims a report by the Good Pub Guide. Glenda Cooper, Consumer Affairs Correspondent, investigates the Great Beer Rip-Off.

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With the Kyoto Conference due to be held in Bonn later this month, the US is under pressure to match Europe's reduction in carbon emissions.

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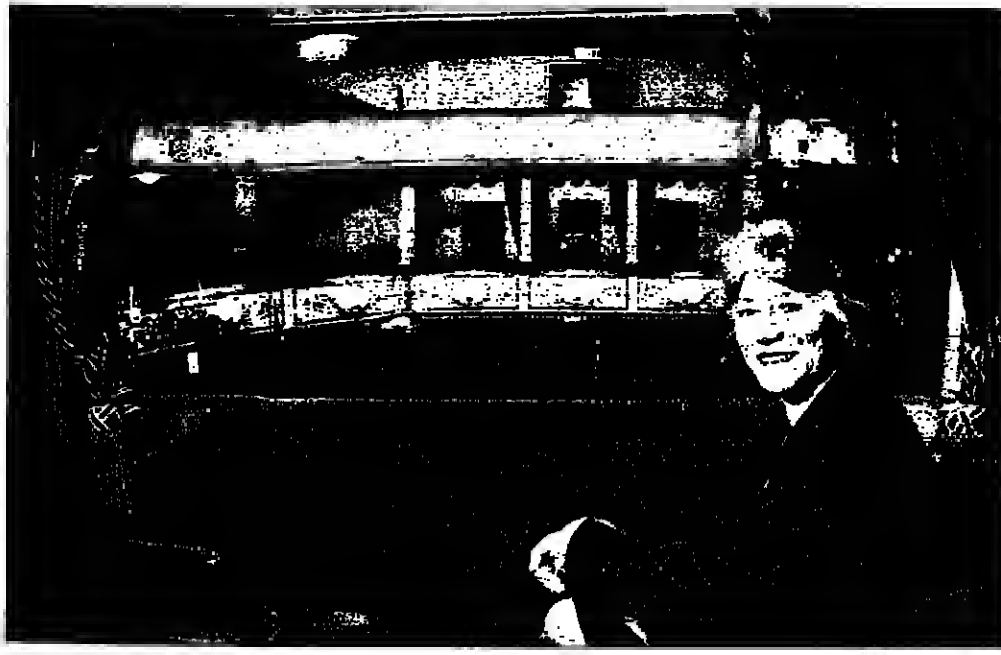
Sieve Collins, World Boxing Organisation super-middleweight champion, stunned the sport by announcing his retirement.

Ruth Picardie service

A memorial service celebrating the life of the *Independent's* former journalist Ruth Picardie will be held on Monday 6 October at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1, at 11am. Ruth, who died of cancer last week, leaving a husband and two young twins, was one of the best and most widely loved journalists we had.



PEOPLE



Millionairess gives West End a new lease of life

Janet Holmes a Court, the Australian millionairess who owns 10 West End theatres, is on a mission to make them people-friendly. Yesterday she completed the latest phase in the £20m refurbishment of Stoll Moss Theatres, when a £1m renovation at the Lyric Theatre saw the cosy foyer's silver-leaf ceilings and wood panelling restored, new seats with added leg room for the audience, and a removal of the flock wallpaper in the auditorium and its replacement with a painted deep maroon.

It is too glib to say that Mrs Holmes a Court, the executive chairman of Stoll Moss Theatres, has brought a woman's eye to theatre. But, without question the changes she has instigated have all been aimed at making theatregoing a more comfortable experience.

"Some of these buildings have been extremely badly neglected for decades," she said. "I think theatre-goers have been getting a rough deal. I noticed immediately there was a problem with women's lavatories. Here at the Lyric we had a gents' toilet which had 16 positions and a ladies' toilet with

two. And it doesn't compute. We've swapped that round. Now the ladies have 10 cubicles and the gents have two. Before, ladies had to make a decision at the interval whether to have a drink or spend the whole time queuing. "The Lyric, the oldest theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue, had takeaway Indian restaurant flock wallpaper, which is very nice in an Indian restaurant, but not in an 1888 theatre. And people are four inches taller now than they were in 1888. I noticed the lack of leg room in West End theatre the moment I came here. We've put in continental seating with much better leg room."

The widow of the Australian businessman Robert Holmes a Court, who died of a heart attack in 1990, Mrs Holmes a Court is relishing playing a far more active role in the Stoll Moss empire than her late husband.

The empire includes flagships like the London Palladium and the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, as well as the bulk of Shaftesbury Avenue, and a massive cattle business back in Australia.

David Lister Arts News Editor

Diana bodyguard set to return home

Trevor Rees-Jones, only survivor of the accident which killed Diana, Princess of Wales, is expected to leave hospital in Paris shortly and go home to Britain.

Meanwhile, evidence emerged suggesting a second car was involved in the accident. Earlier yesterday Mr Rees-Jones, 29, had a second interview with detectives investigating the crash on 31 August.

But the bodyguard, who suffered head and chest injuries, is suffering from partial and possibly temporary amnesia. It is understood Judge Hervé Stéphan, leading the criminal investigation into the accident, has no objection to him leaving France, suggesting investigators have little hope he will recover his memory in the near future.

It was hoped Mr Rees-Jones might be able to shed light on the role of photographers pursuing the Mercedes and say whether, as now suspected, there was a glancing collision with a slower-moving car. Parts of the tail light of a Fiat Uno were found near the crash scene. It emerged yesterday that paint samples taken from a graze on the right side of the Mercedes were also from a Fiat Uno.

John Lichfield

'Brookside' lesson was too much for teachers

David Blunkett has learned the hard way. Ask a soap opera for help promoting your education crusade and don't be surprised if the result is a little ruder than the Open University.

In response to a request from the education and employment secretary, Channel 4's *Brookside* agreed to introduce a storyline involving teaching to its mix of drama and social comment. Perhaps unfortunately for Mr Blunkett, the character chosen to illustrate the theme is Jimmy Corkill, the soap's resident ne'er do well, who has bluffed his way on to a teacher training course using falsified qualifications.

The development so alarmed the Teacher Training Agency, responsible for maintaining the image of the profession, that it has written to *Brookside* producer Ric Mellis urging sensitivity in the treatment of "the teacher-training issue".

The letter, from TTA head of communications Davian Jabri, appeals to the soap's producers as "responsible film-makers" to remember that "teaching is one of the most important professions in the country".

Lucy Ward, Education Correspondent

UPDATE

HEALTH

Soya clue to cancer prevention

Soya products, fruit, vegetables and flax seed may ward off breast cancer, according to research. It is a diet that may turn out to be the strongest protective factor yet discovered against the disease. Scientists believe they have identified an element in the regime which may reduce the risk of breast cancer up to fourfold.

A comparison of two groups found that those who ate a diet rich in phyto-oestrogens, a group of naturally occurring chemicals derived from plants, were much less likely to develop the disease. Phyto-oestrogens are similar to the hormone oestrogen and are found mainly in soya products and the fibre present in whole grains, berries, fruit, vegetables and flax seed. Researchers have long known that diet plays a part in breast cancer based on evidence that women who migrate from countries where the disease is rare, such as Japan, to those where it is common, such as the US, increase their risk as they adopt the lifestyle of the host country.

Researchers at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre in Perth, Western Australia, interviewed 144 women with newly diagnosed breast cancer and compared them with the same number of controls. They tested their urine for a range of phyto-oestrogens and similar compounds called lignans and found high levels were associated with a substantial reduction in risk of the disease.

— Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor

EDUCATION

Maths claims do not add up

Government claims that maths standards in primary schools are rising were challenged yesterday by research suggesting there has been no improvement for eight years. Researchers at Manchester University say their study shows maths standards have remained stable despite billions spent on the national curriculum since its introduction in 1989. Some pupils may even be being held back, they claim.

The report questions the reliability of national curriculum tests, the present means of judging the standard of maths. According to those tests, which can be adjusted to reflect changes in the national curriculum, 44 per cent of 11-year-olds reached expected standards in 1995, rising to 54 per cent in 1996 and 62 per cent this year. The research, published in today's *Times Educational Supplement*, challenges the Government's pledge that by the end of this parliament, in 2002, three out of four 11-year-olds will be competent in maths.

Researchers looked at maths results achieved by six- and 11-year-olds in five schools in one local education authority over the last eight years. They used the same simple tests throughout the period of the study.

Lucy Ward, Education Correspondent

DRUG BUDGET

Row over cholesterol treatment

The National Health Service Executive is accused today of issuing misleading guidance to health authorities and GPs on the use of cholesterol-lowering drugs.

Health economists at the University of York and at Warwickshire health authority say the national guidance calls for a level of treatment that is unachievable, fails to state the likely benefits and ignores the question of cost effectiveness. In the *British Medical Journal*, the authors say that in Warwickshire's case, the use of such drugs in line with the guidance would cost £3m, one fifth of the total drugs budget. They say the NHS Executive's advice is "simply inadequate".

Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor

TOURIST RATES

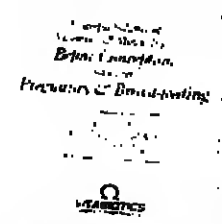
Australia (dollars)	2.142	Japan (yen)	192.91
Austria (schillings)	19.53	Malta (lira)	0.611
Belgium (francs)	57.42	Netherlands (guilders)	3.12
Canada (\$)	2.167	Norway (kroner)	11.24
Cyprus (pounds)	0.888	Portugal (escudos)	281.34
Denmark (kroner)	10.64	Spain (pesetas)	234.44
France (francs)	9.34	Sweden (kroner)	11.98
Germany (marks)	2.78	Switzerland (francs)	2.29
Greece (drachme)	442.44	Turkey (lira)	2685.02
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Ireland (punts)	1.07		

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Source: Thomas Cook

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ZITS



by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

7.30 FOR 8



by Chris Priestley

New doubt raised as nurse tells of second murder at Saudi hospital

Details are emerging of the murder of a second nurse at the hospital where Yvonne Gilford was beaten and stabbed. While Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan protest their innocence over her killing, Steve Boggan examines chilling similarities between the two murders.

When they found Liberty de Guzman, she had been beaten, strangled, stabbed and left for dead in her room at the King Fahd Military Medical Centre in Dhahran.

It is a case the Saudis do not like to talk about. When *The Independent* asked about it a week ago, no details were forthcoming. No one at the hospital would discuss it; neither would Saudi journalists.

Yesterday, however, a nurse who used to work at the hospital came forward and told how Mrs de Guzman met her death in similar circumstances to Yvonne Gilford. Furthermore, she described how Mrs de Guzman's husband was arrested for her murder and was later found dead in a prison cell.

Incredibly, he was supposed to have committed suicide by repeatedly banging his head on a washbasin.

The murder, in 1994, was described by Sharon Markula, 28, who now lives in Brisbane, Australia. She spoke out following a television programme in which Rosemary Kidman, another nurse who had worked in Saudi Arabia, announced - without any hard evidence - that she believed Deborah Parry, 38, and Lucille McLauchlan, 31, had killed 55-year-old Ms Gilford last December.



Murder victim Yvonne Gilford: 'Her death is like a copycat killing'

However, far from throwing her weight behind Ms Kidman's assertion, she gave details of a theory of her own - one which had at least some evidence to support it.

In an interview with Scotland's *Daily Record*, Ms Markula, who worked at the hospital for two years, said that Ms Gilford, a fellow Australian, had been harassed by security guards in the weeks before her death; so had Mrs de Guzman.

She said both women had received large amounts of back pay before they were murdered. Both had been beaten and stabbed; Mrs de Guzman, a Filipina, was strangled. Ms Gilford was suffocated. And she claimed that a security guard had "gone missing" shortly after each death.

"The British girls are innocent - a killer is still on the loose," she said. "I always thought the murderer would strike again. Yvonne's death is like a copycat killing. It has to be the same person who's responsible."

Lawyers acting for the British nurses have imposed a news blackout while they negotiate over "blood money" with Frank Gilford, Ms Gilford's brother.

Ms McLauchlan has already been found guilty and sentenced to eight years in prison and 500 lashes but Ms Parry still awaits her fate. If she is found guilty of "intentional murder", Mr Gilford's acceptance of blood money will prevent her being beheaded.

Sources close to the nurses say the lawyers were aware of the case and were shocked by it. But they were refused permission to refer to it or to present any other evidence at the women's trial.

Ms Markula, 28, said Ms de Guzman's husband was arrested for her murder and died six weeks later. Staff at the hospital did not believe he killed her as he was at the compound security gate at the time of the murder.

"Liberty was living in fear because her room had been broken into twice," said Ms Markula. "She was terrified because only the security guards had a copy of the room key. Someone had got in and left a cigarette butt in her kitchen. It was like a calling card to warn her she was being watched. The same thing happened to Yvonne and she was keeping a diary of the break-ins and weird phone calls before she died."

Ms Markula said staff at the hospital understood that a bank card supposedly taken from Ms Gilford's room and used after her murder actually went missing a month before she was killed.

Senior officials at the Saudi Arabian embassy in London denied knowledge of Ms de Guzman's murder yesterday.

A written request for further information was ignored.

Corporate staff bank on giving time to charitable cause



Team spirit: Goldman Sachs staff and youngsters head for the tape during sports day at Burgess Park adventure playground. Photograph: Tom Pilston

Every employee of the investment bank Goldman Sachs will be given a day off this month to do charity work. Clare Comer joined a group of bankers, including the chairman, Peter Sutherland, at a sports day in south London.

The thank you card designed by the children read: "Thank U Golden Sachs", and the impromptu play at lunchtime told the story of Mr and Mrs Smith, whose lives were transformed by "a company down the road". The company in question was not the friendly corner

shop, but rather, the multi-billion dollar investment bank Goldman Sachs. The bankers who normally spend every waking hour slaving for £1m Christmas bonuses had hung up their Savile Row suits and switched off their mobiles for a day. Everyone, from secretary to chairman, was in the grip of a sudden gust of corporate compassion. Instead of buy, buy, buy, it was give, give, give.

To the 10, 11, and 12-year-olds who participated in Goldman Sachs' sports day, it was a PE paradise. For the first time in their lives, they had skipping ropes, hurdles, space hoppers, footballs, basketballs and netball posts, - plus adults who wanted to play with them. "They [the adults] were kind to us," said Abi, nine. "They never shouted at us."

This is, perhaps, more of a compliment than it sounds. Many of these children suffer routine abuse, neglect and violence at the hands of adults and, were it not for Kid's Company, the Southwark-based charity which hosted the sports day, they might well give up.

Their teachers were astounded - not so much by the range of games and quality of equipment, but by the change in their behaviour. "The kids are responding so well," said Robbie Devlin, a fifth form teacher. "Darren has been refusing to come to class lately. Today, he's like a different boy. I'd say this has been a revolutionary experience for these children - to discover that there are adults that are interested in them."

The screams of exhilaration in Burgess Park adventure

playground in Southwark, could be heard from some distance. On drawing closer, it became clear that the bankers were making as much noise as the children. They willed their team to win and ran for their life - as if their next multi-billion deal depended on the outcome of the egg and spoon race.

There were six teams and each team member wore a T-shirt with a letter from the word "United" on it. On their backs was a word: "U" stood for "Understanding", "N" for "Nation", "I" for "International", "T" for "Trust", "E" for "Equal" and "D" for "Determination".

Goldman Sachs has not sought publicity for its charity work. A spokesman said that the scheme was dual-purpose: to give something back to communities and cement the com-

pany's strong team spirit, and added: "We are not unique in doing this." But what is unique, is the scheme's global scale. Seven thousand five hundred of the bank's 10,000 world-wide staff have signed up for a day's charity work this month. There are 1,250 volunteers from the London office alone.

One young investment banker, who was practising his golf swing in the courtyard, said he was glad of the opportunity. "My work is quite intense, with long hours and a lot of travelling... You lose focus on things like this. It's good to get a proper balance on reality because, as you know, the City isn't always the most real place."

Donations to Kid's Company can be sent to: 40 Barfleh Road, Nunhead, London, SE15 3PS.

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Call for CS spray inquiry after death verdict

A jury brought a verdict of unlawful killing on a handcuffed man who died shortly after being sprayed in the face by a police officer with CS spray. Jason Bennetto, *Crime Correspondent*, looks at the implications.

An urgent inquiry into the safety of CS spray, at present used by most police forces in Britain, was urged by a coroner yesterday, following the latest death in custody.

An unlawful killing verdict was brought in the case of Ibrahim Sey, 29, who died soon after being sprayed in the face with CS despite being surrounded by police officers and having his hands chained behind his back.

This brought an immediate response from two Scottish forces, Easterhouse and Dundee, who have suspended trials of the spray. Government lawyers will now decide whether to bring a criminal prosecution against any of the Metropolitan Police officers involved.

Mr Sey, a mentally ill father of two, was arrested in March last year after his wife called the police to their home.

He was taken to Ilford police station, east London, where a struggle broke out and the 18-stone Mr Sey was forced to the ground and handcuffed. The struggle continued with up to eight officers and PC Jackie Cannon sprayed him in the face from about six feet. Mr Sey was then taken to a custody suite, laid face down on the floor and searched until one officer realised he had stopped breathing.

The jury at Snaresbrook, east London, who returned a 7-2 majority verdict of unlawful

killings, heard that Mr Sey died as a result of asphyxia due to being restrained and because of a mental illness known as excited delirium. The coroner said reports suggested the CS spray was not the cause of death.

Dr Harold Price, the coroner, said there was an urgent need to examine the use of CS and the solvent with which it was mixed to make the spray.

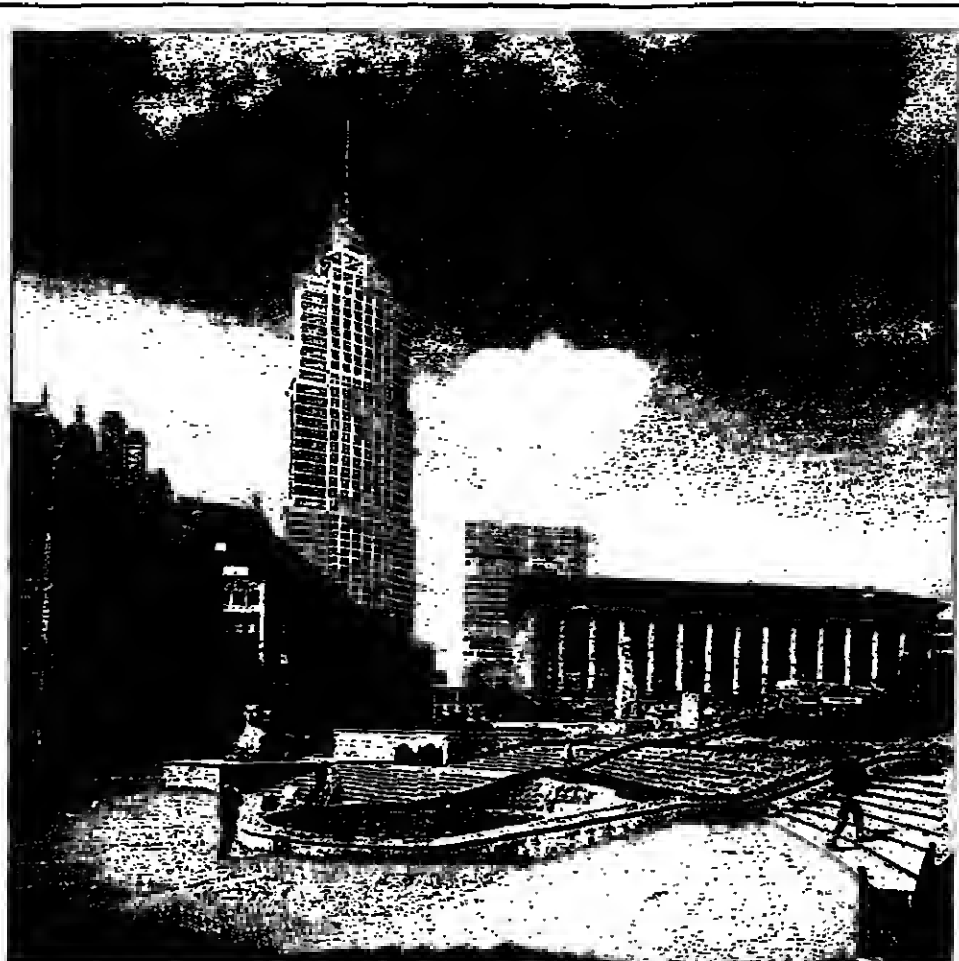
He said: "The use of CS spray should be reviewed by all police forces. The guidelines for its use in the first place and the verbal warning given should be explored."

Since the introduction of CS sprays in August last year there have been growing concerns about the safety of the hand-held devices which cause streaming eyes and nose and breathing difficulties. Two chief constables are refusing to arm their officers with CS spray because of the possible side-effects.

But a spokesman for the Association of Chief Police Officers said last night that they had no plans to review the use of CS spray, which he said had greatly reduced the number of attacks on officers and the public. Scotland Yard, however, is now examining the use of CS following the inquiry.

Mr Sey's widow, Amie, said yesterday: "I knew these people killed him. He needed to be taken to hospital not for them to kill him. The verdict means justice but it will never repay the loss of my husband."

The CPS will now consider whether any police officers should be prosecuted. They are at present reconsidering decisions not to prosecute the officers involved in the deaths of Shiji Lapite, a Nigerian who died in north London in 1994, and Richard O'Brien, an Irishman who died in south London in the same year.



An artist's impression of the City Tower planned for the centre of Birmingham

Second city's tower dreams

Plans were unveiled yesterday for a £300m development which would include Britain's second-tallest skyscraper. The Arena Central scheme would create a "new international landmark" for Birmingham, towering 656ft (200 metres) over Centenary Square in the heart of the West Midlands city, the developers Hampton Trust said.

The heart of the development is the City Tower, which would soar above the 600ft International Finance Centre - formerly the NatWest Tower - in the City of London. But it would still be dwarfed by the tower at Canary Wharf. In Docklands, east London, which reaches 800ft at its peak.

Included in the plans, com-

prising more than one million square feet of lettable space, are a 400-bedroom hotel, residential apartments, offices, an ice rink, cinema, sports centre, casino and theme rides.

Graeme Jackson, the Hampton Trust's chairman and chief executive, said that Arena Central would become Birmingham's leisure "jewel in the crown". "Arena Central will create for Birmingham a centre of excellence for leisure, arts and entertainment," he said.

The development would provide a home for the Birmingham Film Theatre and proposed National Asian Film Institute, as well as Britain's first 100-seat city centre interactive theme ride.

A complex called the Twi-

light Zone would include a Las Vegas-style theatre-restaurant, casino, nightclubs and restaurants. A large "water feature" in the centre of the development will be equipped to be frozen at any time of year for use as an ice rink. And City Tower itself would house a hotel, apartments and offices.

The plans must be approved by Birmingham City Council before work can begin, but they have already won plaudits from the authority's deputy leader Councillor Bryan Bird.

"I am delighted to see this proposal. It will add to the attractions of the Broad Street area, bringing new visitors, new jobs, new residents and a greater international image."

— Jojo Moyes

Porter opens challenge to Westminster surcharge

There is nothing wrong with local authorities having politically motivated policies provided they are justifiable on local government grounds, the High Court heard yesterday.

Dame Shirley Porter and four former colleagues from Westminster Council were beginning their legal challenge to a £31m surcharge over the "Homes for Votes" affair, a case which could have serious implications for local government.

Anthony Scriven QC, representing Dame Shirley Porter, yesterday accused John Magill, the district auditor, of having "misconceived the role of politics in local government" in accusing the former leader of Westminster City Council of "disgraceful and improper gerrymandering" in his final report issued last year.

Mr Scriven said that Mr Magill's decision to hold Dame Shirley and her colleagues liable to repayment of £31.6m for alleged council losses had exposed them to "financial ruin".

He said: "It is true that Shirley Porter's father was the most successful harrow-boy of all time, building up the Tesco empire, but £31m is a massive sum for anyone."

Mr Magill - who sat in the back row of the court yesterday but who will not give evidence during the five-week hearing - reported last year on Westminster's attempts between 1987 and 1989 to win votes in marginal wards by moving council tenants and selling homes cheaply under the right-to-buy scheme.

But Mr Scriven said: "We would suggest that improving conditions in marginal wards has been a frequent and legitimate tactic by ruling parties in local government as long as there were also local government grounds for doing so."

Dame Shirley is expected to give evidence in the case for the first time on Monday. Her fellow appellants are former council deputy leader David Weeks; former housing committee chairman Peter Hartley; former managing director Bill Phillips; and Graham England, Westminster's former housing director.

— Jon Burrell

Straw confirms plans for corporate killing legislation

Government plans for company directors to face charges of "corporate killing" were confirmed yesterday by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, who said that those whose criminal negligence caused the deaths of innocent people should not escape punishment.

John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, also backed the move, reported exclusively in *The Independent* yesterday, saying that people were concerned about safety on the railways because private companies were driven by profit. Personal injury lawyers said the planned reform, based on recommendations from the Law Commission last year, was long overdue.

Andrew Tucker, a senior personal injury partner with the Sheffield law firm Irwin Mitchell, who acted for bereaved families after the Zeebrugge, King's Cross, Clapham and Marchioness disasters, said: "It will force directors to become accountable and take health and safety very seriously or face heavy fines." There have only been two successful prosecutions for "corporate" manslaughter, but these both involved small, one-man companies.

The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers said the old law was unworkable because of the need to prove that one person, the "controlling mind" of the corporation, caused the deaths.

— Patricia Wynn Davies, Legal Affairs Editor

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5/CHILDREN

هكذا من الأصل

Rupees handout may save the lost daughters of India

India has 40 million fewer women than it would have, if the sexual balance had been left to nature. What has happened to this population the size of that of England and Wales? Most were aborted; many were killed after birth. An anxious government now plans to reward couples for having daughters. Peter Popham asks if it can change the course of a horrifying battle of the sexes.

The Indian government chose yesterday, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday and a national holiday, to launch a modest 720 million rupee (£12.4m) scheme to give the daughters of the nation's poorest families hope of a better start in life.

Families throughout the country earning less than 11,000 rupees (£190) per year and who produce a daughter will be rewarded with a payment of 500 rupees - rather less than £9. They will also get financial incentives to encourage them to send their daughters to school.

The reasons the government has stepped in are brutally simple. The arrival of a daughter can be a financial disaster. A male heir is needed to carry on the family name. A girl, by contrast, is considered "another family's wealth", and the demands for a big dowry, though forbidden by the Anti-Dowry Act, can often ruin poorer families or those with several daughters.

The dowry threat induces many families to forestall the problem in more or less barbaric ways. In parts of poor states like Bihar, there are still said to be midwives who specialise in strangling girl babies at birth. Elsewhere women go to respectable clinics for the amniocentesis test: ostensibly used to test for genetic defects, but in India almost invariably to check the baby's sex. If it's a girl, abortion often follows soon afterwards.

The government says that in a study of 8,000 abortions carried out after amniocentesis in Bombay, 7,999 of the foetuses were female. In this way India's traditional imbalance between the sexes has got

worse: in 1901 there were 972 females for every 1,000 males, but 90 years on there were only 927. Three years ago sex determination tests were banned by law, but they continue unabated.

Supposing the daughter makes it out of the womb, her prospects are still poor compared to those of her brothers. In the countryside, even if boys go to school the girls are likely to be kept behind to help in the house - which helps to account for the fact that female illiteracy is 60 per cent, while male is 35 per cent.

The woes continue into adulthood, with the dowry burden and related terrors: the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) reported recently that 5,000 Indian women every year are burned to death by their in-

laws in retribution for their families' failure to provide sufficient dowry.

However, the government scheme is flawed because it is in the poorest parts of the countryside, where it could do most good, that corruption is rife and the money is likely to end up in the wrong hands. Even if it goes to families with baby girls, there is no way of ensuring that it is the baby girls who will benefit. Boys, it is still almost universally believed, matter more.

It is nevertheless a first step: the first time after years of worthy talk that the Indian government has put a little money where its mouth is. "In India we've been talking about the girl-child for a decade, about the necessity of upliftment," said Vanita Nathani, director of a private organisation involved with gender issues in poor villages near the capital.

"But this is the first time the authorities have pledged money."

Historically the position of women in Hindu society was extremely grim, from uncertain birth to a fiery death in *sati* on the funeral pyre of the lord and master. *Sati* was abolished in the 19th century (though a case of an attempted *sati* was reported in Rajasthan just last week). But in many other respects the position of women has hardly advanced at all. "If a boy is born, there is happiness," explains the government's advertisement launching the scheme in today's *Hindustan Times*. "If a girl is born, there is sorrow."

Against this great wall of prejudice and discrimination, the government's new scheme could well have all the impact of a peashooter. But women who work on the girl-child problem in poor communities gave it a cautious welcome yesterday. "If the money reaches the people it's meant to reach to the interior," said Vanita Nathani, "it will be useful. In a city like Delhi, 500 rupees means nothing. In the interior it is significant. But it's only a step. We also need a proper educational infrastructure in the interior, proper schools and teachers and incentives to motivate people to send their children to school."

But for these good things to happen, the first battle has to be won in the womb. And for this, the government's new scheme may tilt the odds slightly in favour of the girl child's survival.

THE MISSING MILLIONS

The Indian government announced a ban on tests to determine whether an expectant mother is carrying a boy or a girl after census-takers recorded an alarming drop in India's female population. World-wide, for every 100 men, there are 105 women; in India, the average fell to 93 women for every 100 men, but in some regions there are fewer than 85 per 100.

Unicef, in a recent report, stated: "There is perhaps no more shameful statistic than the fact that some 40 to 50 million girls and women are 'missing' from the Indian population." One Bombay hospital that carried out sex tests on foetuses asked patients to report back if they had undergone abortions and whether the foetus was a boy or a girl. Social workers discovered that, for every aborted male, there were 1,000 aborted females.

Female infanticide was banned by the British in India back in 1870, but the practice persists. It is not only the poor who resort to infanticide. Unicef contends that in Haryana and Punjab, two rich farming states, the ratio is about 87 women to 100 men.

China takes on parental prejudice

"Mothers, take your daughters back home!" read one headline in a Chinese newspaper over a story about two abandoned baby girls. There are no direct financial incentives in China on offer for families which embrace their unwanted female children, but there has been an intense propaganda campaign over recent years to persuade parents that a girl is as much a blessing as a boy.

In the cities, where the one child policy is strictly imposed, prejudice against girls has eased. But in the countryside, the preference for male children is often overwhelming, and new wives live in dread of bearing female children. Sex-selective abortions are still reported to be widespread, with high technology coming to the service of traditional customs. In even relatively backward areas, hospitals have ultra-sound scanners which allow expectant mothers to determine the sex of the foetus, although the central government outlawed this practice in 1995.

At worst, prejudice results in the death by neglect and abandonment of girls when they are born. But many girls are simply not registered at birth, and sent to distant relatives, so that the couple can try for a boy. In the early 1990s, all these factors contributed to a sex ratio birth imbalance of around 117 boys born to every 100 girls.

In many rural areas, the biggest shift in policy has been to allow couples to have a second child without penalties, so long as the births are spread by five years and planned under the quota system. Those who press ahead without permission and have extra children can still be heavily penalised.

Chinese family planning policy has also shifted to offer farmers "economic favours" if they abide by China's family planning rules - regardless of a child's sex. In the countryside, family planning is supposed to be integrated with rural development projects and schemes to increase farmers' incomes. Rural households which obeyed family planning rules are supposed to be given priority in getting loans, materials, technical assistance, and social welfare from the local government. But the reforms further penalise the poorest families which have too many children.



One that got away: A family of migrant workers camping under a film star's poster in Bombay
Photograph: Pamela Singh/FSP

LAI D BACK.

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Trust vote keeps ban on stag hunting

Stag hunting with hounds will stay banned on National Trust land. The trust's decision last night will boost the campaign to ban fox hunting over its next few crucial months, explains Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent.

When the National Trust decided that stag hunting was cruel and unjustifiable earlier this year, those who had long fought all hunting with hounds sensed victory was near. A huge conservative and countryside-loving organisation with more than 2 million mostly middle-class members had finally seen the light.

The trust's decision in April followed research commissioned from a leading animal behaviour expert at Cambridge University. After a two-year study, Professor Patrick Bateson concluded that pursuit by dogs and people on horseback was grossly stressful, exhausting and agonising for the red deer of Devon and Somerset.

The council swiftly agreed and banned stag hunting – but not fox hunting – on all of its land. The move came as Labour was sweeping to victory during the election campaign with a manifesto pledge to allow a free vote in Parliament on banning all hunting with hounds.

So the tide seemed to be running strongly in favour of the abolitionists. But then six people representing the stag hunters and National Trust tenants mounted a legal challenge,

seeking a judicial review against the trust's decision.

Meanwhile, Labour's commitment to providing enough parliamentary time for a Private Member's Bill banning hunting to be passed came into question. And in the summer the pro-blood sports lobby mounted a huge rally against that Bill in Hyde Park in central London.

The High Court judge at the judicial review hearing in August said the trust's original decision had been "rushed to say the least". Mr Justice Robert Walker refused the pro-hunters an injunction which would allow hunting to resume on trust land, but said the trust's council should think again.

All through yesterday afternoon the trust did – and then stuck with the ban, unanimously. In a statement afterwards, the trust said it had carefully considered criticisms of its earlier decision and gone over all the factors involved. It accepted that deer have to be culled in the absence of natural predators, but believes shooting them is far more humane.

Yesterday, the animal welfare groups backing the anti-hunting Bill welcomed the reaffirmation of the ban. "The hunters have been desperate to criticise Professor Bateson's report," said Graham Sirl, of the League Against Cruel Sports.

The report will be used to support MP Michael Foster's anti-hunting Bill, which receives its crucial second reading in the House of Commons at the end of November. But the professor himself has said that just because stags suffer agonies in being hunted, it does not prove foxes do, too.



No Trust: Members of the Quantock Stag Hunt, who have had to find new ways of pursuing their activities

Photograph: David Rose

Activist locks herself in safe

A woman animal-rights protester was continuing to defy bailiffs' attempts to remove her after spending her second night shut in a steel safe underground.

The 24-year-old woman, who calls herself "Greta", is the last of 20 demonstrators who occupied a camp in a small wood outside the gates of Huntingdon Life Sciences chemical research centre near Huntingdon, Cambs. Bailiffs and police moved in to clear the camp early on Tuesday after HLS obtained a High Court eviction order last week.

Several demonstrators had to be cut free after chaining themselves to iron blocks embedded in the ground or attaching themselves to a tree.

Greta, who says she has water but no food, moved into the 5ft by 3ft steel safe when bailiffs arrived and said she would move into an underground tunnel if need be.

Cambridgeshire Under-Sheriff Herbert Robertson said his staff were working slowly to ensure that she was not hurt. Oxygen was being pumped in.

The laboratories have been a target for the animal rights movement for many years.

There has been renewed focus on the company since a Channel 4 documentary in March.

Two workers, who have now left the company, admitted cruelty and were given community service orders by magistrates as a result of the documentary.

The Home Office has warned the company that it could lose its licence if standards were not improved.

Pet passports may replace rabies laws

Britain's tough anti-rabies laws could be replaced by passports for pets, immunisation and micro-chips by the end of 1998. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, says that Lord Rothermere and Chris Patten will be pleased.

Animal welfare groups led by the RSPCA yesterday warmly welcomed the first step towards replacing Britain's six-month quarantine requirements for pets with an updated system of "pet passports" backed up by compulsory vaccination against rabies.

The Government Green Paper published yesterday said the new checks could be in place in late 1998, if action is agreed.

There was heavy briefing that no decision had been reached, but ministers are expected to opt for legislation requiring pets to be vaccinated against rabies, the use of micro-chip implants to identify the animals, blood tests and certificates to prove they are clear of the deadly viral disease.

It could enable travellers heading for European Union countries such as France and

Italy to take their pets with them on holiday for the first time. The cost of the new checks would be borne by pet owners, but it could prove cheaper and less stressful for pets and their owners than holding the animals in quarantine kennels for six months, which can cost up to £1,200 per pet.

Announcing the consultation paper, Jack Cunningham, the agriculture minister, told the

Labour Party conference in Brighton that no changes would be introduced unless they were as effective in combating rabies as the present system.

"It is time to take a fresh look at our quarantine laws," said Dr Cunningham, a dog lover himself. "But any new system must be at least as effective in protecting the British people as the system we have had in place for most of this century."

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SODEXHO ALLIANCE AND MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, INC. TO MERGE THEIR FOOD SERVICE AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT BUSINESSES IN NORTH AMERICA.

* SODEXHO ALLIANCE and MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, Inc. announced they have entered into a definitive agreement to combine SODEXHO's North American operations (SODEXHO NORTH AMERICA) with MARRIOTT's food service and facilities management business (MARRIOTT MANAGEMENT SERVICES).

The combined company, SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES, Inc. will be the largest provider of food and facilities management services in North America, with over 4,800 accounts and annual sales in excess of USD 4 billion. It is expected to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

The merger between SODEXHO NORTH AMERICA and MARRIOTT MANAGEMENT SERVICES is expected to be completed in early 1998.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL shareholders will own 51 percent (with as main shareholder the Marriott family holding approximately 10 percent) and SODEXHO ALLIANCE 49 percent of SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES.

Both Pierre BELLON, Chairman and Chief Executive officer of SODEXHO ALLIANCE and J.W. MARRIOTT, Jr., Chairman and Chief Executive officer of MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, Inc. said they expect the planned transaction to create significant value for their stakeholders.

"SODEXHO ALLIANCE, already leader in the European market, also reinforces its worldwide leadership" said Pierre BELLON, "We have been seeking to expand our presence in the attractive North American market. MARRIOTT MANAGEMENT SERVICES is an excellent strategic fit for us and we are excited about the growth opportunities created by the merger. Both organizations share a commitment to exceptional customer service, shareholder value creation, commitment and opportunity for our people".

"The merger provides MARRIOTT shareholders an ongoing stake in a strong and well focused contract services company with excellent growth prospects", commented J.W. MARRIOTT. "With the industry consolidating and becoming increasingly global, we are extremely pleased to be aligned with SODEXHO ALLIANCE, one of the largest and most successful contract services organizations in the world".

* SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES, Inc.

The company will have an 8 member Board:

- 2 nominated by MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, Inc. including William SHAW, President and Chief Operating Officer of MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, Inc.,
- 3 nominated by SODEXHO ALLIANCE, including Pierre BELLON,
- Charles D. O'DELL, currently President of MARRIOTT MANAGEMENT SERVICES,
- 2 independent American Directors selected jointly by the remainder of the Board.

William SHAW will serve as Non Executive Chairman of the Board.

Charles D. O'DELL will become President and Chief Executive and Michel LANDEL, currently President and Chief Executive Officer of SODEXHO NORTH AMERICA, will become Executive Vice-President of SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES.

Charles D. O'DELL and Michel LANDEL said "SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES will be the top provider of contract services to the corporate, healthcare and education markets in

North America. Our clients will benefit from the combination of the best food programs and operating systems of the two separate companies, as well as the broader range of value-added services we will be able to provide".

They are confident that, as a result of the merger, employees of both MARRIOTT MANAGEMENT SERVICES and SODEXHO NORTH AMERICA will see enhanced career development opportunities.

"SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES will be well positioned to grow at above-average rates", explained Michel LANDEL, "We expect to capture a major share of new business as more organizations recognise the cost savings and performance gains we can help them achieve through outsourcing". Additionally, Charles D. O'DELL noted "joining with worldwide leader SODEXHO ALLIANCE should create synergies that will enhance our competitiveness and accelerate our growth".

"SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES will have considerable appeal to investors" confided Charles D. O'DELL. "This will be a highly focused company with a leadership position in a growing industry. In addition, SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES should increase its profitability through sharing best practices, combining resources and systems integration".

On a proforma basis for the fiscal year ended January 3, 1997, SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES would have had sales of USD 4.1 billion and earnings before interest expense, income taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) of USD 233 million.

Following the merger, total debt of SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES is expected to be USD 1.25 billion.

For SODEXHO ALLIANCE, financing of this transaction will be accompanied by a capital increase of approximately FF 2 billion (USD 330 million).

This rights issue to shareholders will be launched shortly and the Ballon Group has indicated its intention to fully subscribe for its share of such issue.

SODEXHO ALLIANCE will consolidate SODEXHO MARRIOTT SERVICES in its financial statements. The Group will employ more than 212,000 staff with sales on a 12 months proforma basis of around FF 55 billion (USD 9.1 billion).

As a consequence of its stable and predictable cash flow, SODEXHO ALLIANCE will rapidly recover its investment capacity. In 3 years, interest cover should be around 5 and net debt compared to adjusted net worth of around 60%.

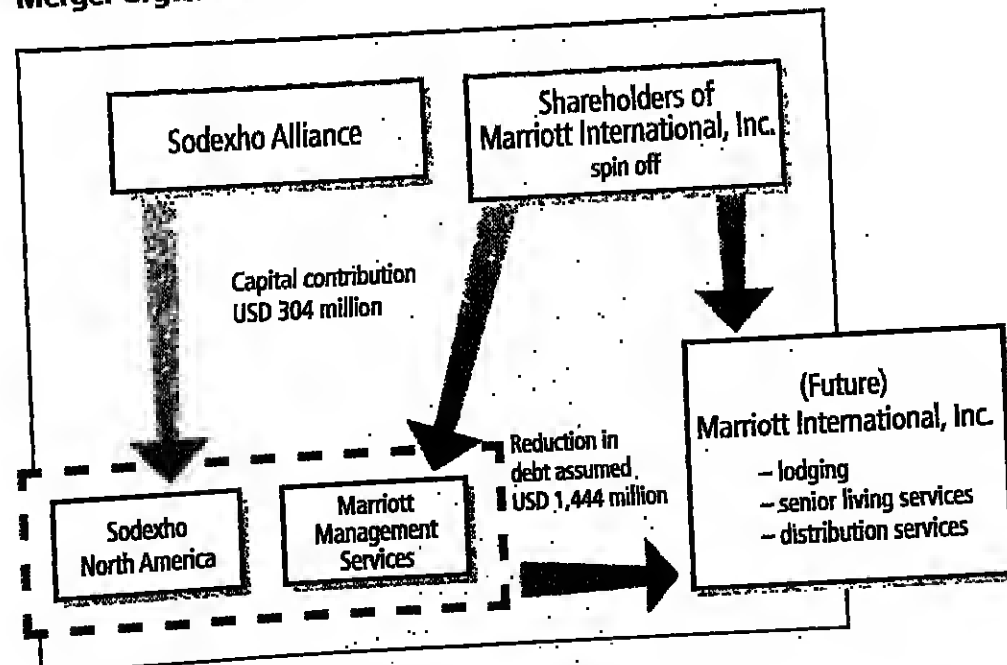
* Other highlights of the transaction

The definitive agreement is subject to customary conditions, including approval by MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, Inc. shareholders, receipt of an affirmative ruling from the Internal Revenue Service on the transaction structure and other regulatory approvals.

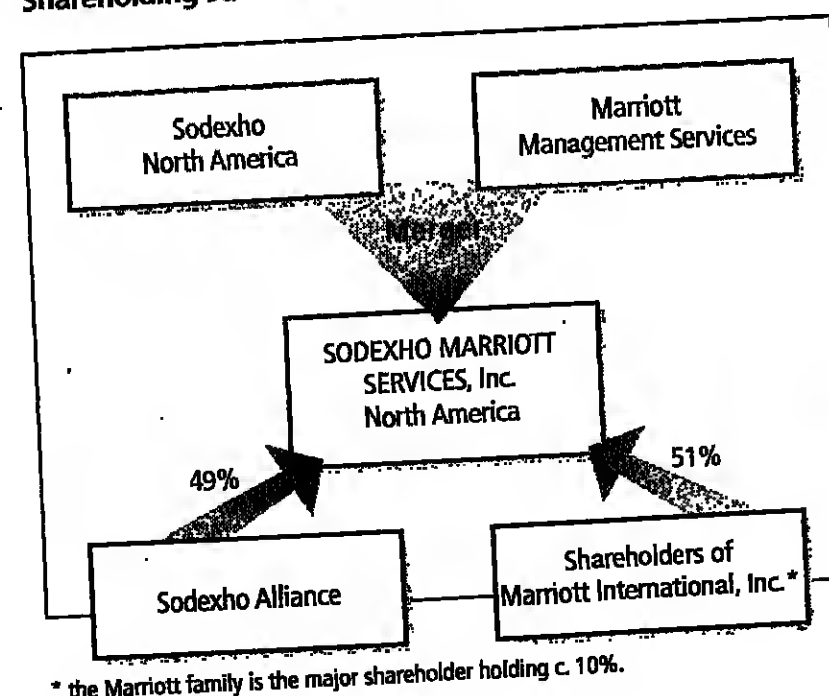
In a separate transaction, SODEXHO ALLIANCE will acquire MARRIOTT's food service and facilities management operations in the United Kingdom.

Merrill Lynch and Co. is acting as advisor to MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, Inc. and Société Générale Securities Corporation is advising SODEXHO ALLIANCE.

Merger organization



Shareholding structure after merger



* the Marriott family is the major shareholder holding c. 10%.

COMPANY PROFILES

* MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, Inc.

is the world's leading hospitality company with over 4,900 operating units in the United States and 51 other countries and territories. Major businesses include hotels operated and franchised under the Marriott, Ritz-Carlton, Courtyard, Residence Inn, Fairfield, Towne Place Suites, Renaissance, New World and Ramada International brands; vacation club (timeshare) resorts, food service and facilities management of clients in business, education and health care, senior living communities and services and food service distribution. Total sales for fiscal year 1996 were USD 10.2 billion. The company is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has approximately 225,000 employees.

* SODEXHO ALLIANCE

is the world leader in food and management services. Operating in 62 countries its 142,000 employees provide services for over 13,500 units in: businesses, hospitals, schools, nursing and retirement homes, prisons and remote sites onshore and offshore throughout the world. The group is also the world's second largest Service Vouchers and Cards company with a range of products that includes restaurant, gift, gasoline, food and home services voucher, as well as medication and other cards. Sodexo Service Vouchers and Cards are an innovative payment media that allows companies to offer employees a tax free perquisite. Sodexo also operates river cruises and is a partner to major international sporting events. Total sales for the SODEXHO ALLIANCE Group exceeded FRF 29 billion (USD 4.6 billion) in fiscal 1997.

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Girl boxer pulls out of fight

A boxing match between two teenage girls was cancelled yesterday following an outcry over the Amateur Boxing Association's decision to support it. Steve Boggan says that although a battle was lost, for women boxers the war may just be starting.

In the end, it wasn't an uppercut or a jab or a haymaker that floored Emma Brammer. It was the media attention and, for a 13-year-old, there was no shame in that.

She decided to call off her historic - some would say barbaric - fight against fellow 13-year-old Andrea Prime after widespread criticism of the bout from boxers, commentators and doctors.

It would have been the first fight sanctioned by the Amateur Boxing Association following a change in its rules earlier this week. The girls would have squared up last night at a club in Stoke-on-Trent but the

growing media attention, bordering on the hysterical, proved too much for Emma.

Her father, Derek Brammer, 42, from Stoke, a life-long supporter of boxing, ended the controversy with a brief statement. "I can confirm that she has withdrawn," he said. "All the adverse publicity surrounding the match has put too much pressure on her."

"She will not be giving up boxing. That is all I am prepared to say."

The proposed fight had split the boxing community. Many, like former British heavyweight champion Henry Cooper, called for it to be banned; others, like Barry McGuigan, former featherweight champion, said it would be sexist to deny women the right to box.

The British Medical Association said simply that to allow women to fight was "demented". It would, a spokesman said, give them equal rights as men to suffer brain damage.

Rob Robertson, chairman of the Amateur Boxing Association, said he was disappointed by the decision to pull out.

"I find it very sad that a young woman

has been prevented from expressing her right to choose her sport because of some of the aggressive interviewing that has taken place. Really, she feels that the pressure is too great."

However, he said many other women were clamouring to box.

"It is not a question of us having to find women who want to take part in a match; in fact there are a thousand women in our clubs and they will do so."

"It is a misrepresentation to say it is dangerous and for one spokesman to conclude it is barbaric is a travesty and not what we know amateur boxing to be."

Andrea's father, Ken Prime, of Wigston, Leicester, said his daughter was "bitterly disappointed" that the fight had been cancelled. But he said he would allow her to box as long as she wanted to.

"I do not feel I have to defend myself over this," he added.

"My daughter likes boxing and while she is enjoying it I am allowing her to do it."

"If she wanted to go horse riding then I would take her horse-riding. It's just the same."



Scores of original drawings and paintings done by Harmen Van Der Beek for Enid Blyton's Noddy books are to be auctioned at Sotheby's in London on 29 October. These two pictures are expected to fetch up to £1,500 each.

Fishermen presumed dead as search is called off

An air and sea search for four fishermen missing in the North Sea was abandoned yesterday.

A spokesman for Aberdeen coastguards said the decision was taken after consultation with the RAF and other rescue services. "All hopes have faded ... Nothing has been sighted, just odd bits of wreckage that may or may not have come from the missing boat."

The search was launched yesterday when the Peterhead-registered vessel *Sapphire* sank in heavy seas 20 miles off the Aberdeenshire coast. Skipper Victor Robertson, 28, jumped to safety from the wheelhouse of the boat and was later winched to safety by an RAF rescue helicopter.

The search - involving two

helicopters and a flotilla of fishing boats - found no trace of his four colleagues, Adam Stephen, 29, Robert Stephen, 25, Victor Podlesny, 45, and Bruce Cameron, 32, all from Peterhead.

Mr Robertson told rescuers that the boat was hit by a massive wave as it returned to Peterhead after a three-day fishing trip.

In a statement released by Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, where he is recovering, Mr Robertson said: "I am devastated by the tragic events that overtook the *Sapphire*."

"My thoughts are with the families of my friends and colleagues ... My sincere thanks go to all members of the rescue services."

Silent monks go fast forward into the modern world



The monks of Caldy, a tiny island two miles off the west Wales coast, are moving into the electronic age.

They're putting together a bid for Lottery cash to set up a video centre where at the press of a button the hundreds of summer visitors who make the 20-minute crossing from Tenby can see on screen life behind the monastery walls. Copies of the 20-minute video will also be on sale.

Brother Gildas, the monks' chief contact with the outside world, said yesterday: "We hear that many people have video machines and decided that this was the best way of explaining Caldy - better perhaps than pamphlets."

The 15 monks, aged between 45 and 80, are members of the Cistercian Order, a silent brotherhood where speech is restricted to essentials. They lead an austere existence, rising at 3am for the first of seven daily services, or Offices as they are properly called. They retire at 8pm. Some of the monks work on the monastery farm which provides much of their vegetarian diet, while others produce perfumes made from the wild flowers carpeting the island. Tours of the monastery are strictly for men only.

— Tony Heath

Time up for bad teachers

Teaching unions have approved plans for fast-track dismissal proceedings which will see staff who are so incompetent that they jeopardise children's education removed after four weeks if they fail to improve.

A new framework for dealing with bad teachers, heads and deputies will also ensure those failing less drastically are sacked within two terms.

The procedure, brokered by the conciliation service Acas, was formally agreed yesterday by a working party of representatives of teacher unions, lo-

cal education authorities, churches and governors.

The procedure will now be passed to schools minister Stephen Byers for approval, and is likely to be adopted nationwide. It replaces a less formal system in which each LEA has its own agreed procedures, adopted by most school governing bodies. The process can drag on for up to two years.

Doug McAvoy, leader of the National Union of Teachers, said: "This agreement offers protection for pupils and fair procedures for teachers."

The Stroke Exhibition & Sale of Art at The Royal Festival Hall

4th - 11th October 1997

A unique exhibition of drawings, paintings and sculptures submitted by some of Britain's most established artists together with works from artists who have suffered the shattering experience of stroke.

Open every day 10.00am-10.00pm

Buyers preview Saturday 4th October 10.00am - 4.00pm

Further information: The Stroke Association 01483 452941

There's good news for anyone who wants to use the phone a bit more. BT's 25% off Sale... on extra calls. Your sale period starts from the first bill you receive after 1st October. Over the following three months you will get 25% back from any extra calls made over your average call bill. (You will receive a letter giving you details of your average bill.) This will count on top of the 25% discount you can get if you're a member of Friends & Family and PremierLine. For details call 24hr Freefone 0800 222 444.



It's good to talk

هكذا من الأصل

9/ARTS NEWS

Council goes in search of a future role

Do we need the Arts Council? Lord Gowrie's resignation as chairman may presage its demise. David Lister, Arts News Editor, finds both government and leading figures in the arts sceptical about its usefulness.

Bookmakers do not tend to offer odds on matters as esoteric as who will succeed Lord Gowrie as chairman of the Arts Council. If they did, the odds among the favourites would be another former Tory arts minister David Mellor, the broadcaster Melvyn Bragg, the Labour peer and film producer Lord Putnam and Baroness Smith, the widow of the former Labour leader John Smith.

These are the names being touted in arts circles. Headhunters are being employed for the first time to find a suitable candidate. And the job will be advertised for the first time to encourage open competition. Whether the organisation the headhunted candidate will head has a future is less certain. The Ministry of Culture's own internal speeding review will look at whether an Arts Council is needed, a spokesman confirmed last night.

Much about the Arts Council sits uneasily with a Labour government committed to bringing art to the people and removing elitism and privilege. For a start, the post of chairman is unpaid and virtually full time, which means only wealthy people can afford to serve. The last two occupants, Lord Gowrie and Lord Palumbo, show the force of that argument.

It is understood that the Government is urgently considering changing the chairmanship to a paid executive chairmanship to rectify this, a change which would mean amending a Royal Charter. Government sources said yesterday that this change would be made if a candidate came forward who would otherwise be excluded from taking up the post because of financial circumstances.

There has also been unease in government, openly expressed by Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, at the way the Arts Council failed to monitor efficiently the management problems at the Royal Opera House, allowed its own secretary general to be hired as the new chief executive without the post being advertised, and allowed the ROH to make unsatisfactory arrangements for temporary homes while Covent Garden was closed - arrangements Lord Gowrie described as "a shambles" even though he was supposed to be monitoring them.

This is all part of what government and other observers see as a lack of accountability in the council, a failing that will be emphasised today when the council announces the findings of a special inquiry government charged it to set up into the Royal Opera House, but will

publish only a summary, not the full report, leading to speculation that it is attempting to hide criticism of itself. A spokeswoman would only say yesterday: "It is not usual for us to publish the full reports in appraisals of our clients."

It has also been criticised for handing out large sums of money to venues run by people serving on its own advisory panels. Add to this government unease about vast tranches of lottery money being distributed by the Council to institutions such as the Royal Opera House with a narrow audience base, and one can see that, in resigning "for entirely personal reasons", Lord Gowrie may have been prescient in seeing a period of conflict not just with government but with the council's own clients. He is also said to have been at odds with members of his own council, furious about the Royal Opera House debacle.

The Arts Council was set up at the end of the Second World War and distributes £186m of government grant to institutions ranging from the Royal Shakespeare Company down to local arts centres. It epitomises the "arm's-length principle" by which a quango runs the nation's arts, and government is not allowed to interfere directly, lest it start pronouncing on what is presented - a fear unlikely to have much basis in reality.

Raymond Gubbay, the classical music and opera promoter, said yesterday: "You just need a civil servant and a secretary on a wet Wednesday afternoon ticking off a list of arts organisations. What else does the Arts Council do? It never takes any far-reaching decisions. It's all based on precedent. The companies that have money get more money. But it's a drastic far-reaching decision that are needed in the arts."

The amount of money it distributed more than doubled when the National Lottery was set up and it became the agency for giving £250m a year to good causes in the arts.

But after years of financial crisis in the arts, failures by the council to sort out problems such as the surplus of symphony orchestras in London, or the funding of regional theatre, respected arts figures are wondering if its existence is justified. Elected government ministers run every other area of British life. They even fund directly the big national museums such as the British Museum, National Gallery and Tate Gallery.

By what logic are the rest of the arts better served by an unelected quango? Far from increasing democratic accountability, it regularly means that when ministers are quizzed in the Commons about problems in the arts, they evade the question by saying "This is a matter for the Arts Council."

Some believe there is a need for a planning body in the arts, but not for a cash dispensing body. Colin Tweedy, director of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, said: "The days of the Arts Council being the core funder of the arts in England are numbered."

هكذا من الأصل



Viviana Durante (left) in rehearsal for the Royal Ballet production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Labatt Hammersmith Apollo theatre, one of the company's temporary homes during the refurbishment of the Royal Opera House. The setting up of these substitute venues was one of the recent controversies to dog the Arts Council under the leadership of Lord Gowrie (top left), whose likely successors when he steps down in April include David Mellor (top right), Melvyn Bragg (above left) and Baroness Smith (above right). Main Photograph: Laurie Lewis

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DAILY POEM

Trepanned

by Eva Salzman

Bad enough, not to have trekked the Himalayas
or smoked a pipe in the back of a Volkswagen bus
with Storm the mechanic, who, with blessings from us
changed the oil and filter on route to enlightenment.
Let's just say you were part of my dimmer days;
I turned the lights down low to cosmic bliss,
laughed at the spirit, in spirit, excited the men,
A corporeal slant. And all I wanted was this:

one little plastic piece of that five-and-dime belief,
a novelty axe to hack at the totems of numbers
on your PC screen. I wanted hand relief - that is,
the gentle touch just before you go under.
Nothing profound, nothing deep. Which is why
I let you drill that Black and Decker into my third eye.

This week's poems come from *The Forward Book of Poetry 1998* (Forward Publishing, £7.95). It consists of short-listed work and selected other entries for this year's Forward Prizes, to be awarded on 8 October. Eva Salzman's poem appears in *Bargain with the Watchman* (OUP), and is reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

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Straw pledges stiffer sentences for racial crimes

Jack Straw yesterday promised to fulfil Labour's election pledge to stamp out racial harassment. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, says the Home Secretary went further than expected.

The Government's war on racial harassment was stepped up with the announcement that the courts will be forced to impose tougher sentences where any crimes have a racial element.

The Crime and Disorder Bill to be introduced at the end of the year will include a provision requiring courts to regard evidence of racial hostility in any crime as an aggravating factor when sentencing. This goes further than the manifesto pledge to introduce new offences of racial harassment and racially-motivated violence which will be included in the Bill.

The Lord Chief Justice issued guidance to courts in 1995

to increase sentences where crimes included a proven racial element, after he increased unduly lenient sentences against three offenders. A survey last week by the Crown Prosecution Service showed that the advice was being followed in only one in five cases.

Mr Straw published a tariff of higher sentences requiring courts to impose prison sentences of up to two years longer for crimes where there is evidence of racial harassment or violence. It means the penalty for malicious wounding, which would normally have a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, could rise to seven years if there was proof of racial harassment or violence.

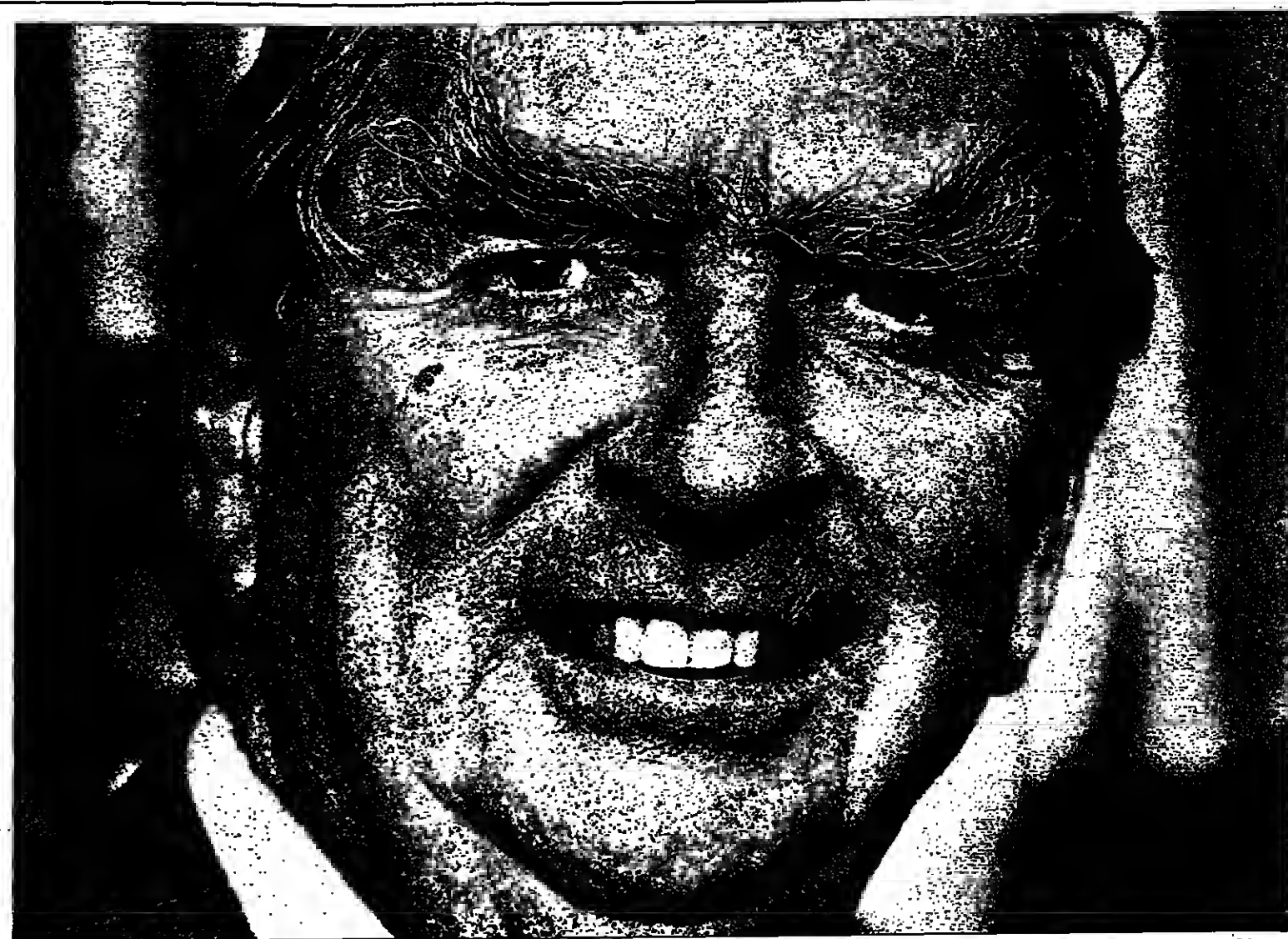
He also raised possibility that the list of offences which will attract a higher sentence could include racial criminal damage. So offenders could face higher penalties for breaking windows in a racial attack than they would in cases of vandalism.

The law and order Bill will be wide ranging, and Mr Straw promised crime victims the

chance to confront the young thugs who offend against them.

The Association of Chief Constables (Acco) gave the proposals a cautious welcome. Nottinghamshire's Chief Constable Colin Bailey, who chairs Acco's race and community relations sub-committee, said: "It will be important to ensure that any new legislation does not create a counter-productive bureaucratic burden, and that standards of proof are not set at an unrealistically high level that would make the task of police and prosecutor even harder. It is reassuring to see that the consultation paper recognises these potential dangers and in particular provides for alternative verdicts should it not be possible to prove a racist element."

The Government's action on racial violence was warmly welcomed at the conference. Bill Morris, leader of the Transport & General Union yesterday called on Tony Blair to do more for racial equality by following the example of President Bill Clinton and putting more blacks in his government.



Old Labour: Lord Healey, the former chancellor, at a party in Brighton last night to celebrate his 80th birthday

Photograph: Brian Harris

Banks in trouble again as critics clamour for his resignation

Tony Banks, the sports minister, scored yet another own-goal yesterday, with an interview in which he spoke of colleagues looking 'like shit'. The exhausted minister says he needs a break.

Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, thinks that could be arranged.



been minister than before and things are beginning to slip rather badly now.

Nevertheless, he took consolation from the appearance of some Commons colleagues, saying: "I look at my colleagues about my age and think, 'My God, I look better than them' because they probably look like shit anyway."

Mr Banks acknowledged that he would never look like some young male cover model. But he added: "At least if I am aspiring to look like that, I might at least look a little bit more like that than, you know, a sort of pile of old doos, as it were, that you see some of our male colleagues look like."

He also accused some MPs of making unreasonable demands and "whingeing". "Every single day there's someone who says to me 'I wrote to you but I haven't got a reply yet,'" Mr Banks said. "Well, get in line, there's thousands of people writing. You try to prioritise... People really feel that the only thing you are waiting for was their letter. They get very stroppy when they don't receive a reply. I just think that people like that are either sad, selfish or both."

Qualified support for Mr Banks came from Clare Short—who has also been prone to deliver embarrassing remarks—who told BBC's Radio 5 Live that the focus comment was "a horrible, dreadful joke". However, she added: "Tony is very, very funny and 19 jokes out of 20 work."

The Prime Minister has agreed that Tony Banks, sports minister, could be allowed to continue to his job in spite of his "tasteless" quip about abortion, with the Tory leader William Hague as the focus.

A leadership source told *The Independent* on Wednesday night that Mr Banks had been handed a "yellow card" warning: one more chance after a series of embarrassing gaffes. But in an unfortunate piece of timing, *Men's Health* magazine yesterday published an interview that had taken place on 17 July, in which he said that some Commons colleagues looked like "a sort of pile of old doos", complained about the unreasonable demands of "whingeing" MPs, and said his 17-hour days left him very, very tired, and in need of a break.

With Mr Blair said to be planning a snap reshuffle of ministers before the Christmas recess, Mr Banks could find he gets his wish. The word

at Brighthelm, from ministers as well as backbench Labour MPs, is that Mr Banks had been treading on too many toes and putting too many backs up with his blunt manner.

However, last night he said that there was no question of him resigning from the Government. "Absolutely not," he told a Sky News reporter in Bratislava. Visiting the Slovakian capital to watch Chelsea in a European Cup Winners' Cup tie, he said it was hardly surprising that some critics, including Tony MPs, were demanding his resignation. "They can join the list," he said.

In the magazine interview, he said: "I'll be honest with you, I'll level with you. I'm feeling very, very tired, you know, not tired enough to jack it in, but very tired, you know. I could do with a break. I know I feel very much better if I'm getting some decent sleep... and some good exercise," he said. "I've actually found it's more difficult to do this in the eight weeks since I've

Union in plea over minimum wage

Labour's biggest affiliate made its bid for a statutory national wage. Barrie Clement, Labour Editor, finds unions urging penalties for employers who break the law.

from the transport union, follows a row over comments on the minimum wage on Wednesday by Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio. The minister said that a lower rate "will apply" to young people, which was later amended to allow the independent commission discretion and to indicate an inferior minimum should only apply to trainees.

Mr Morris insisted that all workers over the age of 18 except those on accredited training courses. He said that it would be a tragedy if the commission was seen to be a puppet of the Government.

The Low Pay Commission was set up to be independent, not a extension of government. If it was seen as such, it would do immense damage to its credibility.

Referring to Mr Mandelson's comments at a fringe meeting, Mr Morris regretted the intervention and hoped there would be no "repetitions".

Another case submitted

Employers should face fines and tax penalties for failing to implement the planned national minimum wage, the Transport and General Workers' Union argued yesterday. As employees' organisations yesterday made their final submissions to the Low Pay Commission, the TGWU said the rate should be set at £4 an hour and urged the Government to employ more civil servants to police the system.

News of the memorandum

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هكذا من الأصل

Leadership wins battle over Trident missiles

Calls for the Government to scrap Trident and cut defence spending failed at Labour's conference yesterday. Fran Abrams heard defence workers' representatives argue that job security should be paramount.

Suggestions by Labour sources that the party's leadership could suffer a conference defeat on nuclear weapons turned out to be ill-founded yesterday. In the event, the leadership won a vote on the issue by 56 per cent to 44 per cent.

Even if the vote had been

lost, the decision would have made not one iota of difference to the Government's policy. George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said there would be no return to the unilateralism which he claimed had kept Labour out of power for 18 years. "If there is one lesson that we have learnt from the general election and 18 long years of opposition, it is that the British people will only elect a government which they trust with the defence of our country. We have now regained that trust but only because of our clear commitments ... which I for one have no intention of breaking."

Cherry Mostesher, from Oxford West and Abingdon, who has been writing a column for

The Independent this week, led the calls for Trident to be abandoned. "This isn't the last stand of the kooky left. This is a call to all of you and to our ethical government for unity against the weapons of mass destruction," she said. The £1.5bn per year spent on the weapons could be put to better use in the education service, she said.

Representatives from more than one union argued in favour of a strong defence industry. Bob Elsom from the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, said ministers should think about British jobs when applying their ethical defence experts policy. "As a union with many thousands of members employed in the defence industry, I must argue

that their employment interests are first fully considered before revoking export licences."

The conference also heard commitments from ministers to a more ethical foreign policy. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, told delegates that he hoped soon to meet the French foreign minister with a view to extending Britain's oew policy across Europe.

Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, announced a change of policy on aid to Indonesia. Her department would no longer fund training of the police force, which has been used to put down pro-democracy demonstrations, but will instead begin supporting human rights projects in occupied East Timor.



Flag day: Protesters outside the conference calling for Trident to be scrapped

Photograph: Brian Harris

FROM THE FLOOR

A busy day for the dark ones

Not a victory, but quite close - yesterday the motion calling for Trident to be scrapped, which I had the honour of proposing, came close to success and gave us the best debate of the week.

It was a busy day for the dark ones if conference floor rumour is to be believed but more of that later.

The last time I was at a conference with wall-to-wall ministers and heads of state was a United Nations hash I was covering as the Tehran correspondent of this paper. For the first morning, as well as the ubiquitous company of bearded security men, I was followed by a young Iranian cub reporter on his first big assignment, eager to learn from an old pro, he said.

He disappeared during lunch but as I spotted him later that afternoon and approached him he blurted: "I'm sorry, they have told me you are a British spy, I can't be seen with you." Yesterday, after my speech I was overwhelmed by a feeling of *déjà vu* as I approached the group of delegates I had met during the week around Stalag Millbank by the sea - the Labour Party Conference compound. They looked at me uneasily and then whispered that they were very sorry but their regional

organisers were watching them and they didn't want to risk being seen with me.

Meanwhile, in the conference gossip had spread like wild fire that "they" were out to kill the Trident motion as well as one calling for defence spending cuts.

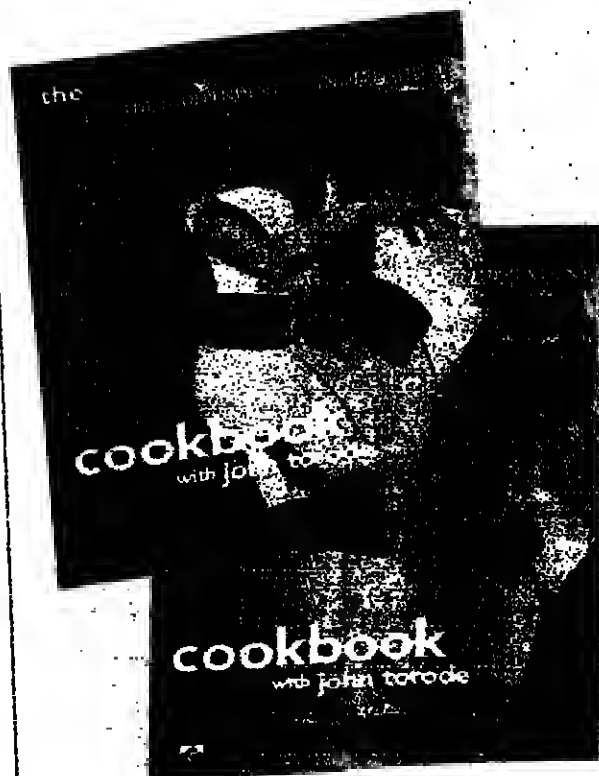
Earlier in the week the woman who was to second my motion told me that she had come under heavy lobbying to drop the motion. She said that the junior defence minister, John Reid, had spoken to her personally and that she wanted to drop the whole thing.

As I stepped up onto the podium yesterday something took hold of me, I trashed the speech I had taken a week to prepare, and spoke from the heart. My second then delivered a speech that ran well over the allocated three minutes and when asked several times to finish her remarks insisted that she just wanted to say something else - that she did not want to support the motion. My thanks to whoever it was who, without hesitation, seconded from the floor.

I really have no idea if any of these stories are true. I merely give them to you to convey the atmosphere of conference.

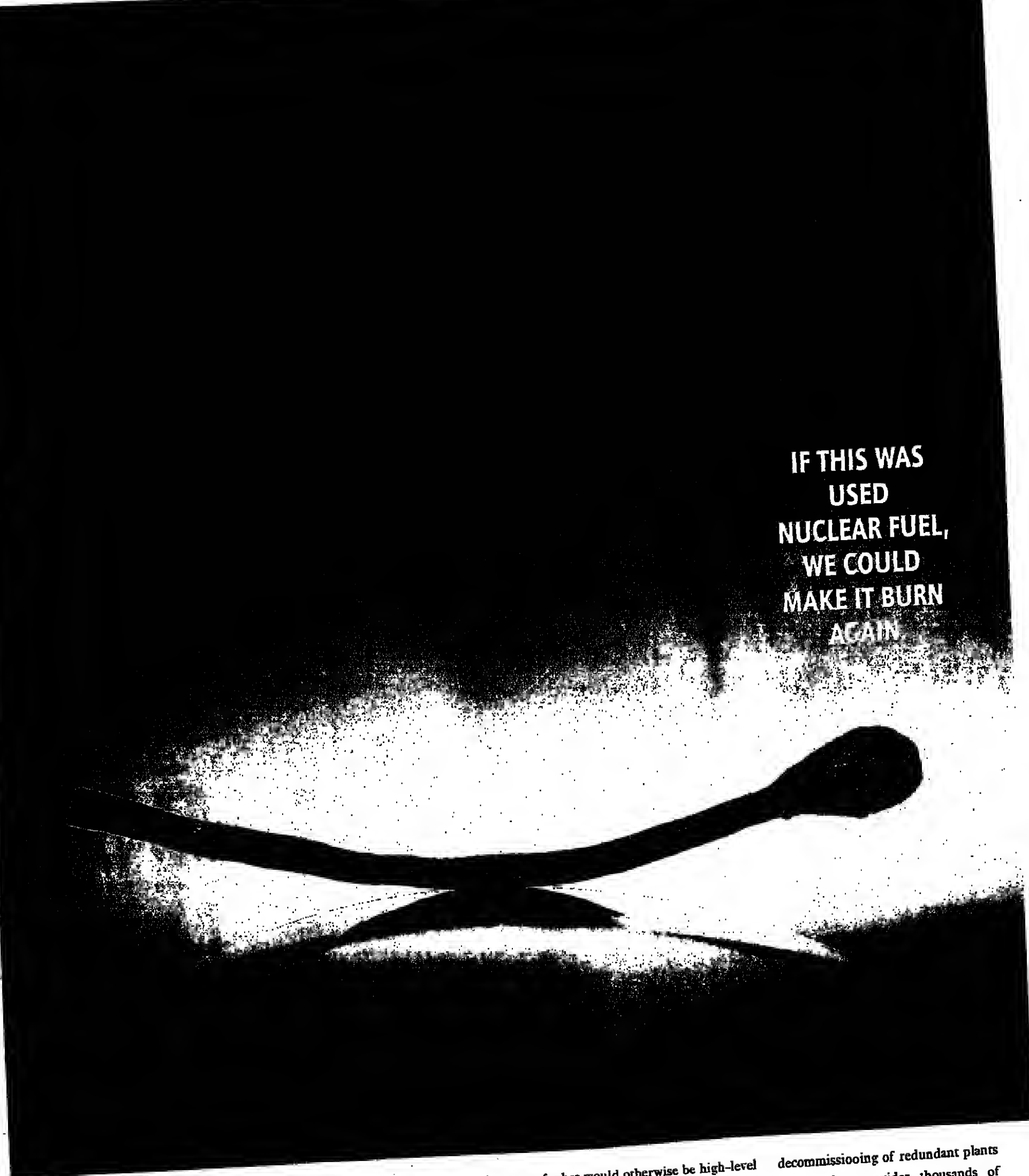
— Cherry Mostesher

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12/SPIN DOCTORS

How 'Government Sources' massaged the message

Labour's spin doctors have been busy in Brighton this week, creating news agendas, setting some hares running and snaring others. Our Political Editor examines their machinations and manipulations.

Last weekend two Sunday newspapers were told that Peter Mandelson, founding father of the spinning trade in Britain, was not going to win a place on the Labour Party's national executive committee.

The two political reporters did not write that piece of "news", because they did not believe it to be true. They actually thought it was an attempt to make the minister without portfolio look even better when he won a "surprise" victory on Tuesday.

When Tuesday came, and it was certain that he was not going to win a seat, the spin doctors were out in force at the headquarters hotel, the Metropole, and, later, to the conference media centre.

The damage-limitation was based on the "line" that the national executive vote was a personal beauty contest that had nothing to do with Tony Blair's project to modernise the party and that, anyway, Mr Mandelson was not very well-known to party members. Only the delegates from Mars can have missed Mr Mandelson over the last year.

One of the most bizarre exercises in damage-limiting spin was carried on the front page of yesterday's *Sun*, under the banner headline: "TV star's twisted love for Blair's top man". The story identified Alastair Campbell, press secretary to the Prime Minister, as "the innocent victim of the actress's deluded passion".

A number of informed sources said yesterday that Mr Campbell had given the story to the *Sun* because he wanted to "spoil" a more hostile version that a Sunday newspaper had been planning to run this weekend.

Some of the week's spin was more positive, such as the briefing on Gordon Brown's speech,

restoring the party commitment to full employment - although the general public could be forgiven for wondering how the preview could attract more attention than the Chancellor's speech itself.

At least Mr Brown uttered the words. The *Sunday Express* reported this week that Mr Blair would refer to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, which he did not do. But the same newspaper presented a preview briefing on the Blair speech as if it had got hold of an early draft. Mr Blair was so puzzled by that hint of a leak

BY
ANTHONY
BEVINS

that he asked Mr Campbell: "What on earth is going on here?"

Mr Campbell could not have made more use of the Prime Minister's text. The *Observer* was told that his halitosis against global warming would form a centre-piece of the speech. By Tuesday, it had been boiled down to a single paragraph. The *Daily Mail* fared much better, reporting on Tuesday's front-page that the family would be a centre-piece, as it was.

But the spin itself can backfire, as it appeared to do when Tuesday's *Telegraph* carried a front-page report saying that Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, planned to warn in his conference speech that members of health boards would lose their jobs if they used private health care.

By the time the speech was delivered, the threat appeared to have been watered down and there was a strong suspicion that Mr Dobson had been forced to back off for fear of attracting unwelcome controversy.

On the party side of the spin operation, one of the early exercises of the week was to spread messages of gloom and doom about Wednesday's education vote on tuition fees. Broadcasters were told on Sunday that the leadership was anticipating defeat, which did not

happen when the debate took place. The spin doctor who was responsible for that particular calamity later confessed that the purpose of the exercise had been to turn the heat and spotlight on to the delegates who were threatening to vote against government policy.

In effect, the media were being used as a weapon, raising the question for delegates: "Do you really want to be responsible for a defeat that will be splashed all over the news as a humiliation for the Government?"

The BBC gave that report prominence in its preliminary Sunday reports on the conference. But in an interview with *Progress*, a mainstream party periodical, John Birt, the BBC director-general, said: "In the perfect world, there would be less spin-doctoring than there is. Certainly, I don't think [it] is an aid to good journalism; I think too much of our journalists' and editors' [time] is taken up listening to spin doctors, rather than doing their jobs."

What Mr Birt does not seem to understand is that, because the spin doctors often make and deliver the news, it is part of the job of reporters to have their ears bent by them.

Objects of obsession, page 19



Alastair Campbell in Brighton yesterday, where he has had a busy week of damage limitation and headline-making

Photograph: Brian Harris

Whitehall's press machine 'sidelined'

Civil servants in the Government Information Service are under increasing attack from the spin doctors and their new political masters. Michael Streeter hears that they may turn to the Cabinet Secretary for help.

In the clash between Labour ministers and Whitehall's press officers there has been one telling casualty - an almost complete absence of communication.

A typically blunt letter from Alastair Campbell that government press officers should focus more on the "big messages" of policy is just the latest sign of Labour's unhappiness with Whitehall's team of official information officers.

Ministers have complained loudly about the contrast between government press officers and the ultra-smooth Millbank Labour machine to which they have become accustomed.

However, officials complain that they have received virtually no idea from ministers on just what is required. One source said: "All we've been told is that ministers want us to give the 'message' not the news. And they want us to be more active at weekends, promoting their policies. But that's all we've been told - we feel sidelined and in some cases bullied."

The most extreme case of sidelining is a decision by Harriet Harman, Secretary of State for Social Security, to appoint an external public relations consultant to promote the New Deal for Lone Parents campaign.

Union officials representing staff have complained that this move is "insulting" to their professionalism and has "drastically" undermined morale.

The Government's arguments are summarised in the Campbell memo which says: "There are three parts to any story - the build-up, the event and the follow through. My sense is that the middle of these three gets all the attention... We should always know how big stories will be playing in the next day's papers."

David Luxton, national officer for the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists, which represents many civil servants, warned that there had been a "blurring of the edges" between the job of the information officers and party press officers. "The information officers are there to explain departmental policy to the public and media - not just to act as press officers for individual ministers."

He said the IPMS is considering seeking help from Sir Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary, in clarifying the role of information officers. "Our members are keen to work with the new administration and learn any new tricks their new masters think necessary - but that can only be done by working together."

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Hizbollah winning war with deadly £12 'rocks'

Dogged by indiscipline, inefficiency and the almost total collapse of its intelligence network in southern Lebanon, the Israeli army is losing its war against pro-Iranian Hizbollah guerrillas north of its border with Lebanon. More than 100 suspected collaborators have been seized by Hizbollah within the past 12 months, while both sides are now using increasingly sophisticated weapons to kill each other.

The "rocks" are made of Bakelite. The Hizbollah buy them at Beirut's garden shops where fake stones for rockeries on the balconies of high-rise buildings cost scarcely £12 – and in which the internal lamp can easily be removed to make way for explosives. The Israeli version – another garden "rock" accessory – is packed with plastic explosive and ball-bearings to give extra killing power. Every few days, the United Nations bomb-disposal men – aware of a new and sophisticated mechanism within the triggering area – defuse these lethal cocktails; both sides, they say, have become sophisticated in blowing each other up. Sometimes, several "rocks" are linked together with wires and attached to anti-personnel mines. Last month, an Israeli

bomber – putting together his camouflaged explosives in a workshop – accidentally left a Hebrew ordnance tag inside the "rock". On another, one UN unit found "six ballbearings" written in Arabic underneath. But it is the Hizbollah who are

winning the war. So far this year, the Israeli occupation army has lost 37 of its men, not counting another 73 who were killed when two military helicopters collided on their way to Lebanon. And last week, they came in for a further shock.

After discovering that their Centurion tanks were vulnerable to the Hizbollah's Sagger missiles, the Israelis withdrew all but their armour-draped Merkava tanks from southern Lebanon. But the Hizbollah, after acquiring upgraded Saggars, were able to fire a missile right through the bull of a Merkava, killing instantly the Israeli lieutenant commanding the tank. All hatches on the tank had been battered down; he was supposed to have been safe.

Furthermore, what the Hizbollah lacks in weaponry, it is making up for with extra guerrillas. Two weeks ago, it traipsed, the militia launched 25 simultaneous attacks along the Israeli occupation line from the foothills of Mount Hermon to the Mediterranean; at least 175 men were involved, all firing

their mortars at Israeli military positions at precisely 7pm.

Far more serious for Israel in the long term is the discovery that dozens of their collaborators – including women – have been seized by the Hizbollah. They include the informer who turned double agent and led 15 Israeli soldiers – who believed they were about to kill Hizbollah men – into an ambush outside the village of Ansariyah, blowing up 11 of them with mines.

But they also include the second-in-command of security for the rival Shia Muslim Amal movement in the village of Ein Baal. He was found to have an Israeli two-way radio in the back of his television set and an aerosol can containing maps of Marjayoun last year – Israel's own military professionalism is being called into question.

The official Israeli inquiry into the deaths of five of its soldiers in the Golan Heights who were burnt to death in August by a brush-fire started by their own artillery – during another ambush that went disastrously wrong – has concluded that the

Lebanese militia, the so-called South Lebanon Army (SLA), have defected to the Hizbollah, and Israeli troops now refuse to mount joint patrols with their supposed allies in southern Lebanon. In their turn, SLA men have refused to leave Israel's military compounds to go on day or night patrols. Yet

BY ROBERT
FISK

even as their auxiliaries decline to serve with them – one SLA officer staged a mutiny against the Israelis near the town of Marjayoun last year – Israel's own military professionalism is being called into question.

The official Israeli inquiry into the deaths of five of its soldiers in the Golan Heights who were burnt to death in August by a brush-fire started by their own artillery – during another ambush that went disastrously wrong – has concluded that the

soldiers should have been ordered to evacuate sooner but "had no prior training or understanding on how to behave during fires".

News of this extraordinary lapse – most modern armies are taught that unexpected fire can be as lethal as bullets – came as a report on Israel's Radio Haifa claimed that Israeli engineer soldiers sent to rescue the military victims of the helicopter crash earlier in the year looted the belongings of some of their 73 dead comrades. Although the Israeli army's spokesman denied the report, the radio quoted one of the rescuers as saying that

several of his comrades stole flak jackets bearing the names of the dead soldiers – and that although fierce arguments broke out among them afterwards, some soldiers still possess the stolen equipment.

Another Israeli helicopter disaster almost occurred a few days ago when a case of grenades broke open in the air while Israeli troops were being ferried by night into Lebanon. The machine was forced to land while soldiers frantically

Death in the air: Israeli army rescue workers sift among the wreckage of the two Israeli military helicopters which crashed while on their way to Lebanon last February, with the loss of 37 men

Photograph: Haim Azulai/Reuters



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Russia claims agents foiled Iran nuclear missile plot

Russia's domestic intelligence service said yesterday that it had thwarted attempts to give Iran the wherewithal to make nuclear missiles but an Israeli official said the technology was still getting through.

Israeli intelligence sources have been quoted as saying Russia and China are helping Iran to design its own ballistic nuclear missiles. Washington and Israel have expressed their concern about the reports, which the Kremlin has dismissed.

Itar-Tass news agency quoted a senior Federal Security Service official as saying the FSB "had detected separate cases of cooperation with Iran as a result of which Russian deliveries could have conflicted with international treaties on missile technology transfers. But they were all revealed and prevented."

The FSB is one of the successor organisations of the Soviet-era KGB. The official said that earlier this year the FSB prevented one attempt by Iranians to make parts of liquid-fuel missile engines at a Russian plant, passing them off as gas pumping equipment.

Last week, President Boris Yeltsin denied Russia was supplying nuclear or ballistic missile technology to Tehran, saying: "There is nothing further from the truth."

But the Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said every stage in the transfer of missile technology to Tehran had been authorised by Moscow.

Asked how much of the assistance was officially approved, he said: "All of it. The Russians know about all of it despite their repeated denials, and they are very good at denying."

The official said continued Russian assistance would allow Iran to complete development within one to two years of a long-range missile capable of targeting Israel.

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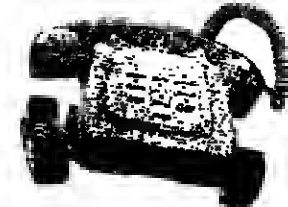
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14/FOOD & DRINK

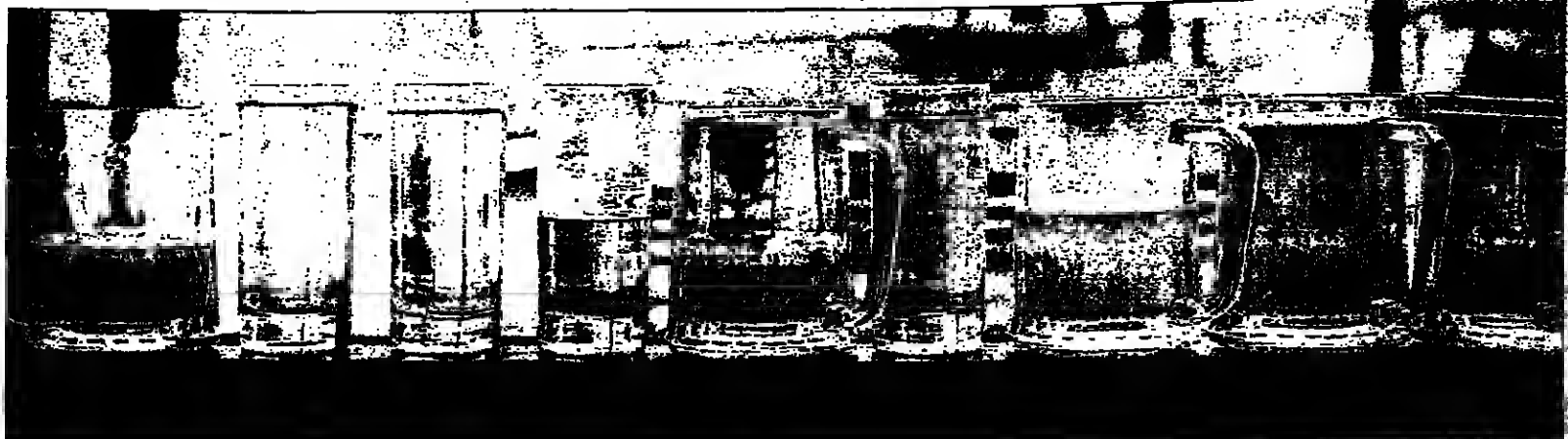
When is a jar not a jar? When it's a pint

Brewers and pubs are secretly inflicting massive price increases on drinkers by pumping air into beer, according to *The Good Pub Guide*. Up to 10 per cent of a pint may be lost in this way. Glenda Cooper, Consumer Affairs Correspondent, investigates.

"I'm the man the very fat man that waters the workers' beer/Yes I'm the man, the very fat man that waters the workers' beer/What do I care if it makes them ill or it costs them terribly dear?/I've a car, a yacht and an aeroplane and I waters the workers' beer".
That dirty, sung by Norman

Willis at past Trades Union Congresses, sums up the British feeling: Mess with anything except a pint of beer. In the past drinkers feared the beer being watered down. But now experts warn that we are in danger of losing up to 10 per cent of a pint by having air pumped into it to create a head.
More pubs in the Midlands and the South are picking up the northern practice of using a device known as a "sparkler" which pumps air into the pint. As a result as much as 10 per cent of the pint may be air, equivalent to increasing the cost of the remaining beer by 11 per cent.
Rob Unsworth, associate editor of *The Good Pub Guide*, said yesterday: "If you get 88 pints in a barrel by careful pouring pubs can squeeze 96 pints - that's eight pints more. Throughout the country that's

quite a lot of money saved ... It's absolutely disgraceful."
The survey of 1,338 pubs comes as an investigation by trading standards officers in Liverpool also estimates that beer drinkers are being shortchanged by up to 6p. The survey of beer measures conducted by trading standards officers in city pubs during September produced some sobering statistics.
Only three drinks out of 60 measured could boast a full pint of beer and almost 40 per cent contained less than 95 per cent of liquid - the brewing industry's own unofficial guideline governing the height of the head. On average, drinks were deemed to be around 4 per cent short of a full liquid pint with some customers sacrificing up to 23p on their tipple.
As a result a Labour MP, Dennis Turner, is to introduce a Private Member's Bill to



Liquid assets: An MP plans to introduce a Private Member's Bill aimed at defining the size of a pint

Photograph: Peter Macdonald

clearly define the size of a pint. He has already won the backing of Nigel Griffiths, the consumer affairs minister, who said: "When the customer asks for a pint and is charged for a

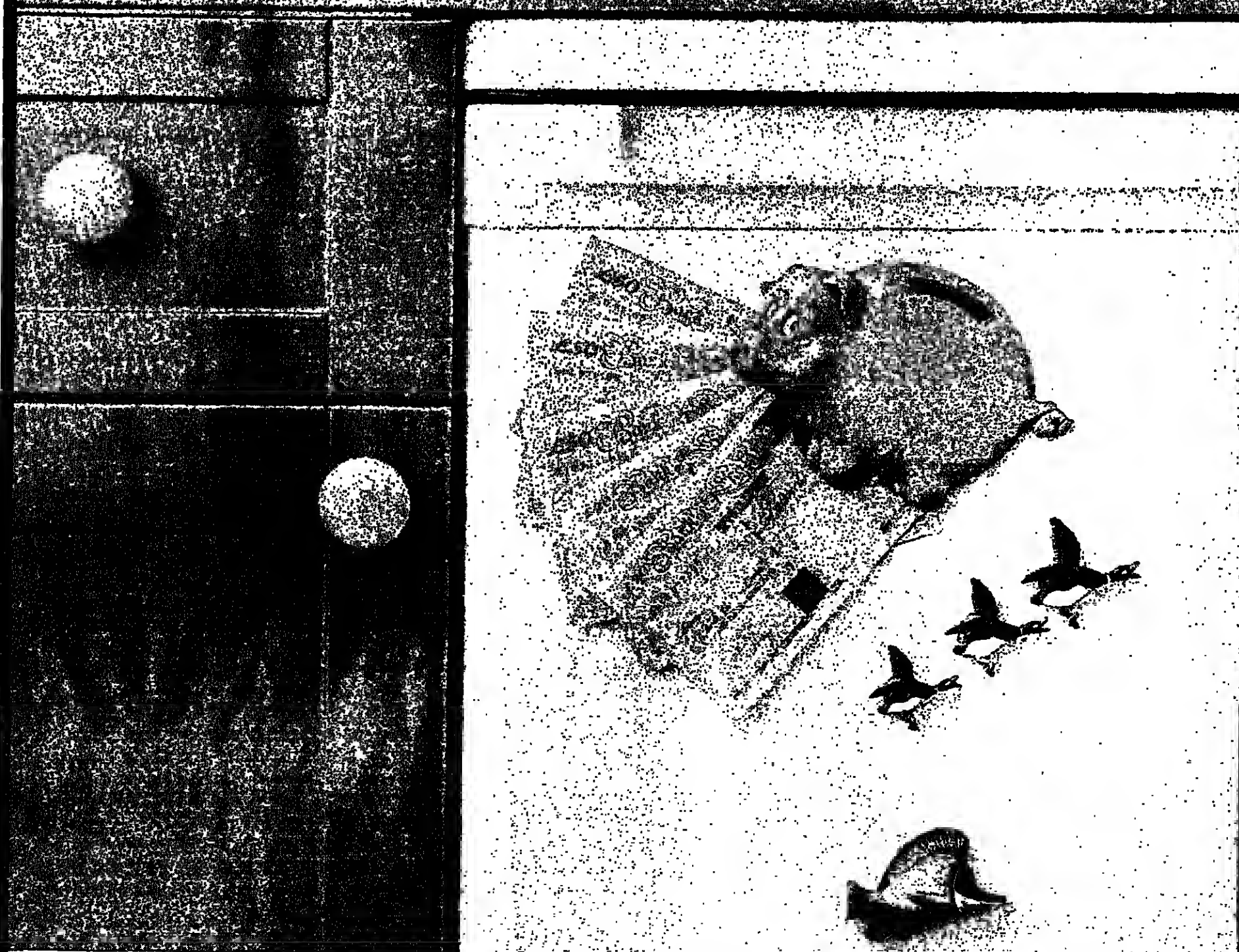
pint, that's the quantity that they should be served."
But a spokesman for the Brewers and Licensed Retailers' Association said it was an issue which attracted few com-

plaints from customers. "Our members are encouraged and encourage their bar staff so that if people are unhappy with their pint they can always get a top-up," he said. "But it

really isn't something that happens very much."
The Good Pub Guide also points out that pubs tied to the big national breweries are still the high-cost option for cus-

tomers - smaller and local regional brewers can save as much as 41p on your pint.
● The winner of the Pub of the Year award is the Wykeham Arms in Winchester.

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Rural restaurants risk extinction

Metropolitan chefs are bringing "vigour and excellence" to the restaurant trade. But if country-house eateries fail to follow suit they may find themselves extinct. Glenda Cooper reports on changes in the nation's eating habits.

Country-house restaurants are "dinosaurs" which "may soon find themselves extinct" unless they wake up to change, experts warn today.
In comparison, it is the metropolitan chefs serving multi-purpose food in multi-purpose outlets who have established what the *Good Food Guide* calls "a new British tradition".
"Where once the restaurant initiative came from a couple who holidayed in France, cooked from Elizabeth David and opened a country restaurant in order to share the thrills ... now it is the townie chefs who capture for their generation the buzz and excitement of eating out."
The annual guide praises the vigour and excellence of the town restaurants. "Japanese

restaurants, for example, seem to have undergone a sea-change partly by bringing mechanical novelty to bear - automated sushi and drinks trolleys - and partly by opening up to a wider clientele," said Jim Ainsworth, editor of the *Good Food Guide*. "Other cultures too are making even more of an impact than ever before, not least Indian and Middle Eastern, providing most commonly ideas and materials for jackdaw British chefs to raid in their restless search for something new."
Country-house hotels face several problems in comparison: they suffer from the fact that in rural areas couples only go there to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries, or only eat out at the weekends. With their higher prices they also have to compete with cheap weekends away across the Channel and foreign tourists finding the UK too expensive.
As a result the country-house restaurants need to realise that they may have to adapt to survive. Mr Ainsworth said many were changing, but cautioned that those who did not could "find themselves extinct".
● *The Good Food Guide* is published by Which? and is available from bookshops: £14.99.

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Mock summit: EU opponents outside the Royal Palace yesterday while the Amsterdam treaty was signed. Photograph: AFP

France presses Britain for a commitment on EMU

France is hoping to hurry up a 'clear signal' of Britain's intentions on the single currency. It hopes that it might get one on Monday when the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, meets his French counterpart, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, in Paris.

But, as John Lichfield reports, Mr Brown is unlikely to give anything away, at least in public.

Gordon Brown and Dominique Strauss-Kahn have a lot in common and a lot to talk about. They are both handsome, youngish men, with a tendency to arrogance, doing the job that they always wanted. Both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the French economy minister are attempting to define a new kind of centre-left economic policy, mixing rigour with selective compassion. Both, in different ways, have key roles to play in the making, or the breaking, of the final negotiations on the European

single currency in the next seven months.

Their meeting in Paris on Monday - informal talks followed by dinner - will be their first proper tête-à-tête since Britain and France elected left-of-centre governments in the late spring. Paris hopes that the meeting will mark a significant new stage in the readmission of Britain to mainstream European politics. French officials talk of the need for the Blair government to make a "clear statement" sometime soon on its policy towards economic and monetary union (EMU). Will there be a referendum next year? Will the Government opt out of the 1999 starting line-up for EMU but declare its desire - referendum permitting - to sign up soon afterwards?

According to British sources, Mr Brown is unlikely to give anything away on Monday, at least in public.

The French have a good reason for wanting to jog Britain along. They feel that the Blair government, once publicly committed to EMU, would be more likely to support France's position in its dispute with

Germany over how the single currency should be managed.

The Socialist-led French administration has scaled down its original ambitions for a "European economic government" which would provide political balance to the monetary power of the new, independent European central bank. But French officials say that they are still pressing for the creation of a "Euro Council", a conclave of finance ministers of the EMU countries to discuss, and sometimes to co-ordinate, broad economic policy. Such a council would not create a new European Union institution, they say. It could be "informal" but it must be "legitimate" (that is, work within the EU treaties) and "visible" (publicly recognised as more than a talking shop).

The French acknowledge that the Blair government is suspicious that such a body might work against the interests of countries which opt out of EMU: in effect, it might become the politburo of a European "hard-core". But once the British government moved towards the single currency, the

French believe that Mr Brown would support their campaign for balanced EMU management, over the purely monetarist German approach.

Whether or not Britain makes an early statement on EMU (the chances are "not"), Mr Brown will play a key role in the final single currency negotiations. Britain takes over the rotating, six-monthly presidency of the EU in January and the Chancellor will chair all the detailed talks leading to final decisions next May on the EMU starting line-up and the exchange rates at which countries will merge their currencies into the Euro.

France is playing down earlier reports in its press that it would like to bring forward the starting date of EMU to forestall a wave of currency speculation in the seven months' transition between these final decisions and the launched date ordained by the Maastricht treaty. But French officials say that it is important that the "Euro Council", dear to Mr Strauss-Kahn's heart, should be in place by May to "steady the boat" during the seven months' hiatus.

CURRENCY COUNTDOWN

1. EU governments immediately to launch or intensify advertising and educational campaigns to win over the general public.
2. Governments to select before the end of 1997 the design of the national faces of euro coins - physical production of coins to start from next May.
3. Before end of 1997, commission to make a formal proposal on exact date for introduction of coins and notes.
4. Member states to present by end 1997 their draft legislation for how national public administrations will make the transition to euros for tax declarations and accounting.
5. Public-debt issuers must clarify by the end of the year the treatment of outstanding stocks of debt and new issues

6. Decisions on the tax consequences of the euro must be made known before the end of the year.
7. Computer and information systems will have to be adapted before end 1998.
8. "EUR" currency code and symbol for the euro to be registered so that computer systems can be adapted.
9. Decision to be taken before end of the year on dual pricing displays in shops after launch of euro.
10. Technical work on coins to be finalised over next three months to include nickel content, quantities of coins to be produced by national mints, handling of used coins and issue of commemorative coins.

Last-minute rush to get the euro into your pocket

Brussels has told EU member states to start preparing consumers, shops, businesses and national administrations for the huge upheaval which switching to the euro in 1999 will entail. This brings Britain's dilemma over membership into even sharper focus, writes Katherine Butler.



Evenhanded: Stallholder Salvatore with lira and euros in Pontassieve, Tuscany, where both currencies are being used in a six-month trial. Photograph: Vincenzo Pinto

With talk of delay in economic and monetary union (EMU) fading into the background and just seven months to go before the selection of the first batch of currencies to join, the European Commission is giving governments an end-of-year deadline to finalise the outstanding practical and legal groundwork for the introduction of the euro.

Urgent decisions are needed on such things as how government departments will deal with the switchover and how public-debt issuers will treat new issues in euros. But fearing psychological trauma among ordinary citizens, the commission also wants governments to launch or intensify public education campaigns. This follows warnings from consumer groups and retailers who believe that public awareness lags severely behind the pace of political pressure for a single currency.

The fears are obvious. How will people cope with prices labelled in what will seem like a foreign currency? Will elderly people stop spending money because they fear the shopkeepers are swindling them? Will mass confusion reign if the new notes and coins start circulating on the first day of the January sales?

Efforts to inform the public up to now have been amateurish in the face of the revolution in store. A "Euro-berge" financed by the European Union was dispatched up the Rhine

earlier this summer dispensing leaflets to bewildered tourists. And some banks have set up bottines to deal with questions from people worried about their savings plans or mortgages. But the commission is now urging governments to prepare for mass education campaigns to run between May 1998 and January 1999.

In the meantime, the focus will be on encouraging training for retailers, bank tellers, consumer groups, and those who will have to act as troubleshooters in the confusion. The commission is also examining whether laws will be needed to protect consumers against high conversion charges during the transition.

The decision to reserve one side of the new coins for "national" symbols peculiar to each member state is intended to enhance public acceptance, but so far only the French and Germans have chosen their designs. Yves Thibault de Silguy, commissioner for the single currency, now wants the remaining candidate countries to unveil theirs before the end of the year so production of coins can begin from May 1998.

The administrative challenge is also enormous, the commission admits: national administrations will have to be revolutionised, for example

to allow companies and individuals to make tax returns in euros. In some countries this will become a possibility as early as 1999 even though notes and coins will not be in circulation until 2002.

Information systems will also have to be adapted and the commission warns that the changes will coincide with massive upheaval caused by the problem of the turn-of-the-century date change - the threat that many computer systems will cease to function properly from 2000. Because keyboards will have to accommodate the new euro symbol, manufacturers need to start preparing new models now.

Banks and big corporations in most member states are at an advanced stage of preparation but the lack of awareness among small businesses was "frightening", the EU industry commissioner Martin Bangemann admitted yesterday.

Mr de Silguy said yesterday that British officials were co-operating fully in discussions on the technical preparations for EMU. That will offer little comfort however to British businesses or retailers who still have no idea whether their customers will still be paying for goods in sterling when their European neighbours are counting their cash in euros.

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15/10/97

16/ENVIRONMENT

All-American eco-freaks want to ban immigration

The biggest environmental organisation in the US, the century-old Sierra Club, is to ballot its members on whether to include an anti-immigration policy in its platform. Mory Dejevsky examines the background to the vote.

The half-million strong Sierra Club is a venerable American institution, whose current publications discuss conserving a state forest in Pennsylvania, the ecological benefits of wetlands and how writing letters to politicians can be as effective a form of lobbying as

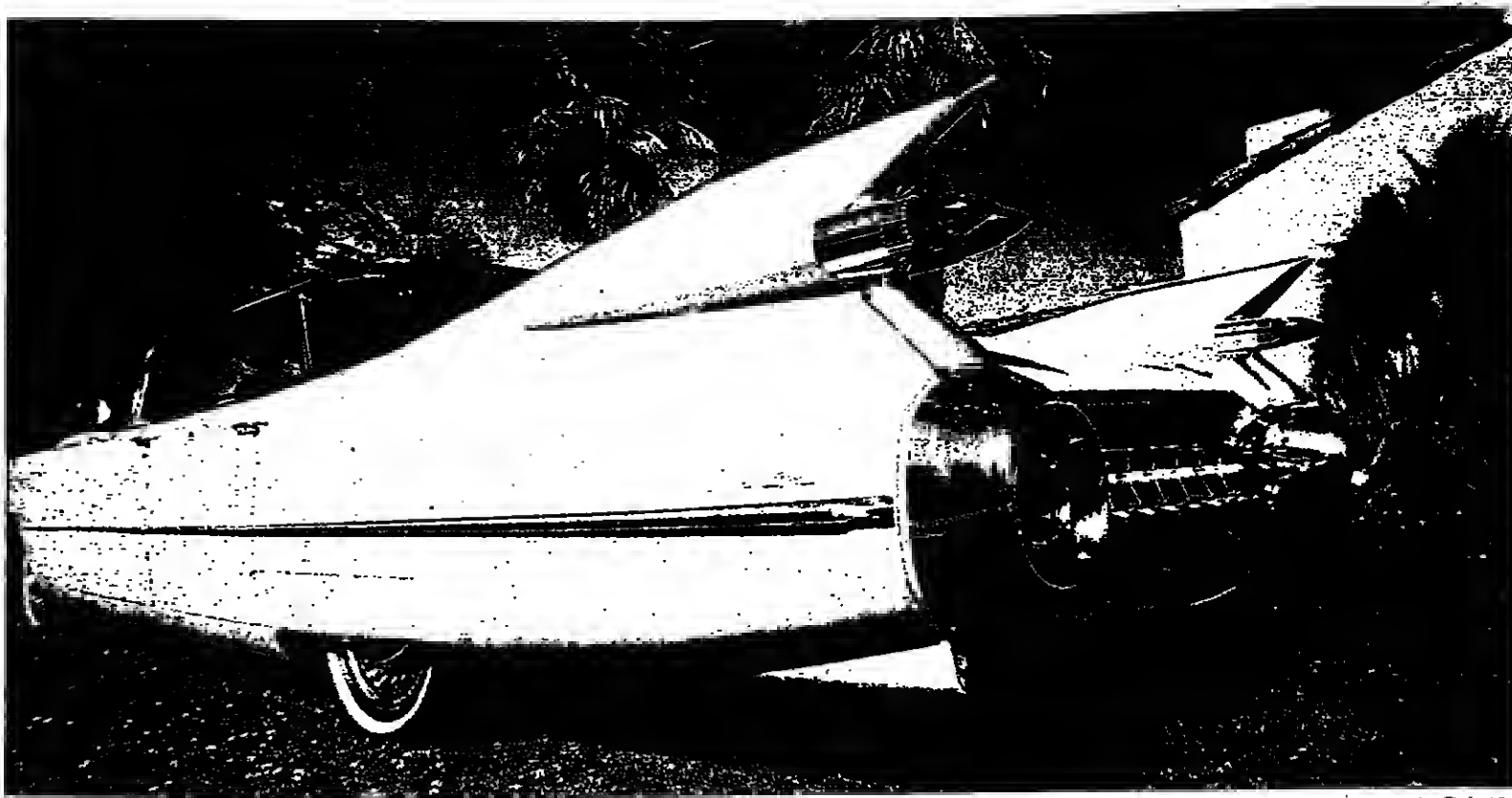
donating large sums of money. For more than 30 years, however, it has incorporated into its aim of preserving wild places in the US and the world, the need - as it sees it - to limit population numbers. To that end, it supports and helps to fund family-planning projects across the world. "A rapid end to population growth in this country and around the world," says its literature, "is an essential part of any effort to protect the environment." In 1990, Sierra Club members gave "population control" the highest number of votes of any of the Club's national campaigns - and the popularity of that issue has not waned.

Now, with immigration registering high among political concerns of several US

states - especially California where the Sierra Club has its headquarters - the club has taken a step further. It has passed in a membership vote a grassroots initiative calling for a reduction in immigration into the United States.

The argument advanced by one of those behind the initiative, Alan Kuper, is that immigration feeds overpopulation which in turn increases traffic, air pollution, water shortages etc. With US population growth now deriving exclusively from immigration - as native-born Americans have fewer children - he believes the club should lead its considerable political weight to the anti-immigration movement.

The vote is scheduled for March and members' approval is not a foregone conclusion.



Big and greedy: Attitudes towards the car in America have changed little since the gas-guzzling days of this 1959 Cadillac

Photograph: Colorific

Clinton pulls out the stops to turn the US green

The United States is under pressure to match Europe's reductions in carbon emissions before world leaders meet in Kyoto to negotiate a global climate treaty.

President Clinton has been trying to persuade his nation by enlisting car makers, scientists and television weather forecasters. But he is meeting some fierce resistance.

Mary Dejevsky says that a scientific conference to be held at the White House on Monday could tip the balance.

Now, with the main preparatory meeting for the Kyoto conference to be held in Bonn later this month, the US must decide whether to support or scupper the planned treaty. The outbreak of cut-throat lobbying in the American media, a succession of briefings and seminars on climate change in Washington this week and some frantic activity at the White House in recent days - to culminate in Monday's "science summit" - are the outward manifestations of a policy battle that is approaching its climax.

At the beginning of the week, President Clinton finally decided to lead from the front and said publicly that he accepted the need to combat global warming.

On Tuesday, he sent his environment secretary, Bruce Babbitt, to address a meeting organised by the Union of Concerned Scientists. Mr Babbitt's first duty was to receive an open letter, signed by more than 1,500 eminent scientists, calling on world leaders - including US leaders - to act urgently to reduce carbon emissions.

On Wednesday, Mr Clinton invited 100 of the country's television weather forecasters to the White House to hear his pitch again, along with the presentations of assembled scientists.

The idea was not, it was said, to impose a "reduce emissions" slant on the nation's weather forecasts, but to inform the broadcasters of the arguments.

Yesterday it was the turn of the car-makers. The chief executives of General Motors, Ford and Chrysler had reportedly requested such a meeting to air what a Ford spokesman described as their "deep reservations" about the Kyoto conference. They fear that higher petrol tax and more environmentally geared specifications could damage the US car market.

Cars and the price of petrol are - as the lobbyists, and the administration well realise - a prize card in the hand of those who oppose a US commitment to reduce carbon emissions.

Only recently liberated from the 55mph speed limit introduced during the Seventies energy crisis, and still wedded to large, heavy cars, Americans are scared by nothing more than the prospect of gasoline and car prices rising to European levels.

The argument, presented forcefully in Washington this week by the former Tory British secretary of state for the environment, John Gummer, is that the vastly higher fuel consumption of American cars

makes motoring in the US almost as expensive as in Europe and that low fuel prices have allowed cars, heating systems and electrical appliances to remain irresponsibly wasteful. It is not one that most Americans want to hear.

Mr Gummer was in the US to make the point that a Conservative government had been both convinced enough of the risk of global warming and concerned enough about its consequences to take effective action - reducing carbon emissions in the UK by almost 20 per cent since 1990.

His message was addressed partly to the Republican majority in the US Congress, which remains unconvinced by the scientific arguments, reluctant to pass legislation that would increase costs, and could block ratification of a treaty. But he was also warning the Administration of the international opprobrium that the US would incur if it diluted or refused to sign the planned Kyoto treaty.

Although Mr Clinton now seems fully converted to the cause and is making it his own, the battle is by no means won. Mr Babbitt told Tuesday's meeting that the President found himself having to manoeuvre between the whirlpool of international disapproval and the "monsters" of the US Senate and revealed that a furious debate was going on inside the administration. That debate, like the one in the country at large, is complicated by Mr Clinton's plans for the imminent deregulation of the US energy sector. The energy industry is thus fighting on multiple fronts - not just against the scientists of global warming, but against anything that would jeopardise their current market position and their future competitiveness.

At Tuesday's conference, Mr Babbitt tried to console the scientists by saying that the US would announce its position at Bonn later this month. Significantly, however, he was substituting for the meeting's billed keynote speaker, Vice-President Al Gore - until recently the administration's "Mr Environment".

Mr Gore's decision to stay in the White House and have the television cameras film him operating a "V-chip" - the device that would allow parents to censor their children's television viewing - showed which cause he judged the politically safer bet. If Mr Gore returns to his role as chief environmentalist, this could be a sign that Mr Clinton has turned the tide. But no one, not even the weather forecasters, is making any firm predictions.

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Court tells council to pick up £2m bill for cliff-fall hotel

Landowners and their insurers face the prospect of huge bills for natural disasters following a High Court judgment. Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, explains.

When the grandiose Holbeck Hall Hotel on the North Yorkshire coast plunged down a cliff-side a few years ago it was only the beginning. That spectacular and expensive landslide in 1993 resulted in a legal earthquake yesterday.

Scarborough borough council was held liable for the destruction of the four star Victorian hotel, and its insurers are facing a bill of about £2m. A judge in London ruled that the authority broke its duty of care to maintain the land and cliffs which it owned between the hotel's surroundings and the sea.

One night in June 1993 part of the Holbeck Hall's gently sloping lawn collapsed. A second slide in the early hours removed most of the remaining lawn. After guests and staff were evacuated, further collapses took out the hotel's conservatory and almost its entire seaward wing.

What was left of the building, which had enjoyed panoramic views of the seaside town and coastline, was unsafe and had to be demolished.

The disaster was headline news, and the late John Smith used it as a potent metaphor for Britain's decline under the Conservatives in his leader's speech to the Labour Party conference a few months later.

The decision of Judge John Hicks QC is highly controversial, and in giving his judgment



Costly slip: Holbeck Hall after the big slide

he invited an appeal against it. Unless it is over-ruled by a higher court, the complex judgment - following a 36 day hearing - leaves landowners liable for any damage caused to their neighbours by natural phenomena like erosion and landslides.

"The liabilities could be phenomenal and the consequences serious," said William Howarth, Professor of environmental law at Kent University. "It goes against the general principle that landowners can't be held responsible for natural hazards, and I hope there is a successful appeal."

The case hinges on the council's duties as a landowner holding the land next to the hotel, and not on its responsibilities to combat coastal erosion. Judge Hicks said he felt bound by a principle established in an earlier, equally controversial case - Leakey versus the National Trust.

In that Court of Appeal

judgment in 1980, the National Trust was held liable for the damage done when rocks tumbled off one of its properties and smashed into a house.

"I regard the Leakey versus National Trust decision as a blot on our jurisprudence," said Professor Howarth. "I know of no instance when it has been applied, until now."

In court, the hotel's insurers' lawyers had alleged that the council's engineering department failed to heed expert advice when it was trying to alleviate the risk of a deep-seated slip of Holbeck cliff.

Lawyers acting for the council's insurers said the stabilising work it planned for the cliffs was based on the recommendations of its geotechnical experts, GEN, who had surveyed the cliff and liability rested with them. They also argued that these works, carried out in 1989, were reasonable and the collapse of the 200ft high cliff could not have been foreseen.

Judge Hicks said it should have been clear that a more far-reaching land stabilisation scheme was necessary. Scarborough had breached a common law duty to take steps to prevent or minimise damage to its neighbour.

John Trebble, Scarborough's chief executive, said there would be an appeal. "The judgment comes as a serious shock to all concerned. It breaks totally new ground as it seeks to create a new duty on landowners, the implications of which are quite startling, based on very nebulous principles."

Coastal councils do have statutory responsibilities for protecting land against sea erosion, but these are framed as legal powers rather than duties. By and large, if a property is being eroded by the sea, that is the landowner's problem.



Flawed monument: The Glenfinnan tower at Loch Shiel, built to commemorate the clansmen who died for Bonnie Prince Charlie, has a growing list and a figure modelled on the wrong hero - supposedly the prince but in fact one of his men
Photograph: Glyn Satterley/NTS

Leaning tower of the North makes a move on Pisa

Edinburgh is the 'Athens of the North' and now Scotland has grounds to make a claim for an emerging 'Pisa of the North'. Stephen Goodwin, Heritage Correspondent, reports on a monument on the move.

Before the authorities closed the Leaning Tower of Pisa seven years ago, ascensionists on the internal spiral staircase constantly bumped the impending wall as they tried to remain upright. Sadly, this curious sensation is denied the Blairistas who now flood Tuscany.

But Pisa has a predeceator to its crown. Standing by the banks of Loch Shiel, in the west of Scotland, the 182-year old Glenfinnan monument to the clansmen who died for Bonnie Prince Charlie is leaning 10 inches to the west.

Talk of closure would be

alarmist. None the less, the monument's guardian, the National Trust for Scotland, is about to appoint a structural engineer to monitor the angle over the next 12 months.

"We had a good look at it a couple of months ago and it is safe enough," said Donald MacAskill, the NTS regional building surveyor. "There are no fissures or cracks showing in the structure."

The Bonnie Prince's Jacobite standard was raised at Glenfinnan in 1745. The NTS visitor centre which tells the story attracts about 60,000 people a year, of whom more

than half go up the 65ft monument.

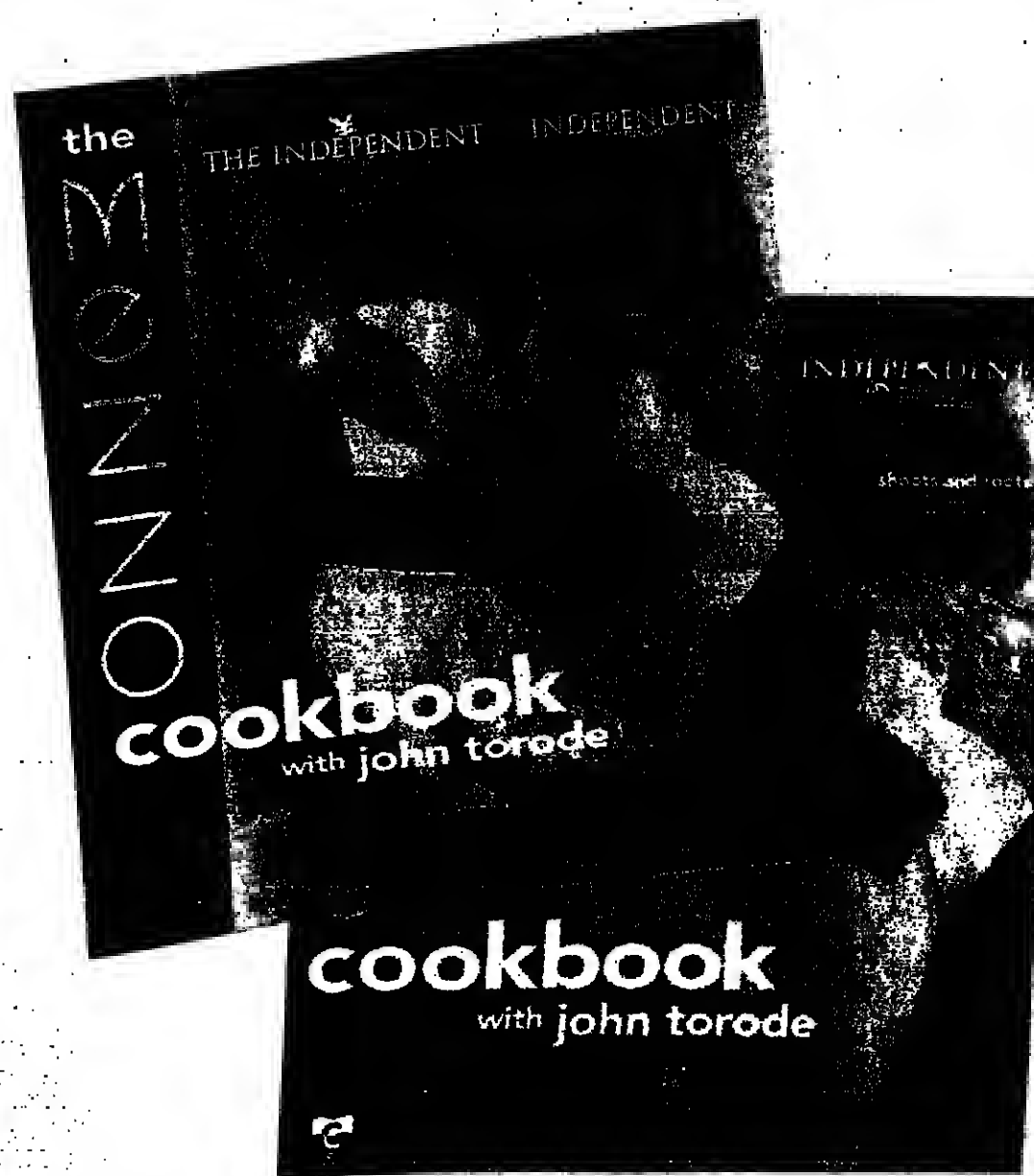
Like Pisa, the tower has an internal spiral stair. However, the lean is nowhere near as dramatic. The top of Pisa's 179ft tower is a giddy 17ft off perpendicular. In 1929 the Glenfinnan monument was recorded as leaning three inches to the east. Now its lean in the opposite direction is just becoming visible to the eye.

It will be up to the £8,000 monitoring and survey programme to determine the precise cause of the list but it seems to be due to subsidence of the sandy peaty soil and

flooding. The monument is only 35ft from the loch and storms have eroded the bank.

Glenfinnan will no doubt be able to take the extra notoriety it is stride. It is not the first time the granite tower has been embarrassed. The sandstone figure gazing from its battlement down Loch Shiel is supposed to be the Bonnie Prince. But the sculptor, John Greenshields, mistakenly modelled the work on a portrait of young George Lockhart of Carnworth - who served in the prince's army - and a chap now inclining increasingly to his left.

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Yeltsin may aim for third term as President

Will Boris Yeltsin stand again for election as Russia's President? He hinted yesterday that his mind is not quite made up. Phil Reeves sifts through the evidence.

Kremlin watchers have never needed more than a slither of a rumour on which to base their predictions. So they were delighted yesterday when Boris Yeltsin served up a considerably tastier morsel — a hint, a palpable hint, that he has not ruled out running for a third term.

As ever, it was not so much what was said, as what wasn't. A month ago the 66-year-old president categorically stated would not seek another stint in office, preferring to stand aside for younger candidates. But yesterday ambiguity set in, fuelled by the evidence that he now seems to be positively relishing his job as the head of a chaotic, crime-drenched, country. He was joking when he recently described himself as 'Tsar Boris the First'. But, for many, it had a plausible ring.

Questioned about a third term by reporters during a trip to Nizhny Novgorod, he laughed, but issued no clear denial. "Friends and colleagues have forbidden me from talking about this," he said.

However faint, the possibility that he might seek to hold onto power is a reflection of the president's extraordinary reversal of fortune in the last ten months. Can this be the man who was so sick with heart trouble only a year ago that he became a near hermit?

This week his former chief of staff, Sergei Filatov, told The Independent that Mr Yeltsin had twice told him that he was thinking of not running in last year's poll, when he won re-election. Those discussions were in the summer of 1995, when he was sick, unpopular, drinking, and sending thousands of his countrymen to their death in Chechnya. In the end, he was persuaded by his supporters — a tiny elite enriched by reforms, who feared a Communist victory — to stay on. Elements of the same group, now divided, seem to be at work again.

A third bid for office would lead to a debate over the Russian constitution which restricts presidents to two terms. However, Mr Yeltsin has some room for manoeuvre: he was first elected as president of the Russian republic in 1991, when it remained part of the Soviet Union. The



President Yeltsin, apparently feeling rather better these days

Russian constitution, however, was not passed until 1993.

Yesterday's squall of speculation will not bring much joy to the millions of Russian impoverished by the transition from Communism, especially those who remember the stagnant last years of Leonid Brezhnev. Mr Yeltsin has already survived seven years longer than the average Russian male: by the end of a third term, he would be 75 — a mere two years younger than Mr Brezhnev when he died.

It is also a measure of the perverse nature of Moscow politics. The vast power of the president severely limits the role of the opposition between elections, condemning them to a life of dreaming wistfully about their next trip to the ballot box.

With three years left to the next election, two of his opponents — ex-general Alexander Lebed, and the liberal Grigori Yavlinsky — have already declared their candidacy. Several others, notably the autocratic mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, are blatantly campaigning. Election politics are on a permanent loop in Russia, and Mr Yeltsin's behaviour yesterday ensured that it keeps spinning merrily.

US fires army laser to test its own satellites

The United States will fire two brief but powerful laser beams at an ageing American satellite in the next few days to test the vulnerability of its satellite systems, defense department officials said. "Secretary of Defense William Cohen has today approved an experiment that will be used to reduce the vulnerability of US satellite systems," the Pentagon said in a brief statement released after a Nato defence ministers' meeting in the Netherlands.

Ken Bacon, a spokesman for Mr Cohen, told reporters in the Netherlands that the two brief beams will be fired at an orbiting US Airforce satellite from the army laser, called the Mid-Infrared Advanced Chemical Laser (MIRACL), from White Sands missile range in the New Mexico desert. They would not try to destroy the satellite, he added.

Joiners to pay Nato costs

Nato told three former communist countries negotiating membership that they would have to bear most of the cost of joining themselves. "The bulk of the cost should lie on the shoulders of the three countries. There's no doubt about that," Nato Secretary-General Javier Solana told a news conference after alliance defence ministers met their counterparts from Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Mr Solana said that Nato would come up with figures before the end of the year, to allow parliaments in its 16 nations and the three new countries time to weigh the facts.

Ultimatum for Karadzic

International officials presented Serb hardliners loyal to war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic with a tough choice: bow to imposed changes on broadcasting or stay off the air. A formal plan to revamp broadcasting from the half of the Bosnian Serb substate led by Karadzic cohorts will be presented today, the office of High Representative Carlos Westendorp said.

His spokesman, Duncan Bullivant, suggested that the plan would ask for the firing of some of the hardliners responsible for broadcasts deemed inflammatory and destructive of Western peace efforts. Broadcasts from Pale, Mr Karadzic's stronghold south of Sarajevo, were pulled from the air on Wednesday, after Nato-led peace troops seized four key transmitters across Bosnia. Since then, Bosnian Serbs have only had broadcasts from Banja Luka in the west by anti-Karadzic supporters of Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic.

Troops on turtle territory

An environmental group accused Nato troops on manoeuvres in southern Greece of damaging a nesting site for the endangered caretta caretta sea turtle. "The beach has been destroyed," said Dimitris Margaritoulis, president of the Sea Turtle Protection Society. Nato officials denied the beach was damaged or that any turtle nests had been harmed. More than 5,000 troops, nearly 200 planes and 70 ships from Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, Portugal and the United States are taking part in Nato's 19-day "Dynamic Mix", a large air, land and sea exercise held in the southwestern Aegean and the Mediterranean.

Arafat visits Hamas founder in hospital



Yasser Arafat embraces Sheikh Yassin in his hospital bed yesterday

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat visited the founder and spiritual leader of the militant Palestinian movement Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, in a Jordanian hospital yesterday.

Sheikh Yassin was released by Israel on Wednesday under mysterious circumstances. Speculation is rising that he may return to Gaza, agencies report.

President Arafat was driven to the hospital by King Hussein of Jordan, who received the ailing cleric on Wednesday just hours after appealing to Israel for his release from jail on humanitarian grounds.

The release was hailed in Jordan as a humanitarian triumph for King Hussein.

But the monarch has come in for sharp criticism from Palestinian officials, who said Yassin should have been returned home to Gaza. They said Arafat, who had continually demanded that Israel free the wheelchair-bound Sheikh Yassin, had

been kept in the dark on his release.

But Arafat put a brave face on the king's intervention yesterday. "I greatly thank King Hussein for this blessed effort which he has exerted to release Sheikh Yassin which we had talked about many times in the past and now (the monarch) has fulfilled his promise," Arafat added.

Israel has not said if it would allow him to return home to the Gaza Strip. But a Hamas leader said he will return to Gaza in two weeks. "Sheikh Ahmed Yassin intends to return to Gaza in two weeks and King Hussein confirmed today that he is free to return whenever he wants," Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi told Reuters in Gaza.

There was intense speculation that Sheikh Yassin's release was connected with the arrest of two men for an attack on a Hamas leader in Jordan. King Hussein reportedly believed the men were acting for Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service.

The men were travelling on Canadian passports, and yesterday Canada expressed unhappiness about the incident. It warned Israel over what it believes may have been the "improper use" of Canadian documents.

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Nestlé chocolate balls lose Disney magic

The confectionery giant Nestlé USA has bowed to public opinion and has agreed to stop selling chocolate sweets with Disney toys hidden inside, a sweet which is still sold in Britain.

The company responded to growing criticism by announcing that it would voluntarily stop marketing the sweets Nestlé Magic chocolate balls although the Food and Drug Administration had not decided whether to force Nestlé to pull the sweets off the market.

For 60 years the United States has banned sweets where toys or trinkets are imbedded in them. In this country sweets containing toys are marked with a warning, but the European Commission is expected to lay down new standards for them.

Nestlé has not recalled the chocolates, but anyone who wishes to return them to the store where they were purchased will

be given a full refund, said Laurie MacDonald, a spokeswoman for the confectionery giant.

"Some of the toys barely, and I mean by a fraction of a little toe, pass the standard chuke test," said Richard Blumenthal, the Attorney-General for Connecticut, who led several state attorneys general in denouncing the chocolates.

"No major corporation ought to be embedding toys in candy, not to mention this kind of tiny character."

The company itself claims the toys are safe and the Consumer Product Safety Commission agreed that the Disney movie figures — inside a ball covered in Nestlé Magic chocolate — were too big to choke a child. And the Food and Drug Administration confirmed on Wednesday that it knew of no injuries associated with Nestlé Magic.

Nestlé Magic first went on sale in the US in July — even though the FDA warned Nestlé at the time that selling the chocolates violated a federal law that prohibits non-nutrition items from being embedded in food unless the agency issues an exemption.

The FDA did not grant that exception to Nestlé, but neither did it immediately take action against the company because its own preliminary review concluded the candies did not pose an imminent hazard.

A spokeswoman for the Child Accident Prevention Trust welcomed Nestlé's move in the US and called for further moves in Britain.

"This is something that needs to be looked at very carefully," she said.

—Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Doctors warn of kangaroo meat bug

Australians have been warned against eating undercooked game meat, including kangaroo and wallaby, after doctors discovered what could be a new parasite spread to humans.

Professor John Goldsmid, professor of medical microbiology at the University of Tasmania, said that a parasite had been found in a Tasmanian man who had suffered severe muscle weakness. At one stage he needed a ventilator and tracheotomy to breathe.

The professor told the Australian College of General Practitioners in Hobart, that the patient was a big eater of native meat and undercooked kangaroo and wallaby involved "probable dangers".

The International Fund for Animal Welfare, which is campaigning against "the cruelty of kangaroo slaughter and the unhygienic treatment of the meat", called on supermarkets in this country to stop selling kangaroo meat. It says the meat "has been touted as the new 'healthy' alternative to red meat in the UK yet it may cause unimaginable health problems".

—Glenda Cooper

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An author uncomfortable with her subject: Marele Day comes face-to-face with her protagonists and she is frightened.

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

The pen may be mightier than the sword but the sheep are mightier than the pen

Marele Day has written a very good, very strange novel which has transformed her career. She was a modestly successful crime writer but 'Lambs of God', a tale of weird goings-on involving nuns and sheep, has made her a star. If you don't believe Ann Treneman, ask Winona Ryder.

Marele Day is a writer who is on the brink of the big time. Her new novel *Lambs of God* has already made her a rich and happy woman. Sales are excellent, reviews great and she has just signed a deal with Hollywood. Can fame be far behind?

But all that seems very far away as I watch Marele - chic in a little black dress and chunky heels - pick her way through the small sheep pasture at Kentish Town city farm. We are here to take a photograph. Her novel is chockful of sheep and it only seemed natural to find a flock for her. Except now that we were here it was clear that Marele is frightened of sheep.

"Is his name John?" she asks with a nervous look at the ram. "The name of the ram in my book is Father John."

"No, his name is Joe and you better watch out for him," says the farmer as he manhandles

the ram away. Marele's eyes get wider and I am sure that she would rather be anywhere else than in an enclosed space with Joe and his harem.

The pasture is getting rather crowded. In addition to the sheep, there is the farmer, Marele, the photographer, me and a radio documentary maker named Barnaby. He is doing a programme for Radio 4 on Marele called "From Down Under to On Top of the World" and thinks it will be great to record what he calls the "actualities" of the sheep. To this end he is standing in the middle of the field, microphone outstretched for baa-baas. He says that when he is done with the actualities, he would like to interview me about my interview with Marele.

This is all getting so strange that I half expect to see Robert Altman burst out of the shrubbery to tell us we are all in one of his movies (presumably about the literary scene). In reality, the only filmmaker being mentioned to do with *Lambs of God* is much younger, much prettier and much bigger box office. Winona Ryder has bought the film rights and will co-produce and star. Marele says sometimes she cannot believe this is happening to her: a 50-year-old former English teacher from Sydney who created the fictional private eye named Claudia Valentine, and wrote four books starring her

but then one day got a crazy idea to write a book about nuns and sheep.

Lambs of God tells the tale of Iphigenia, Carla and Margherita who live in a crumbling monastery on a remote island. The nuns have been alone for so long that they have gone feral and their lives revolve around a bastardised sort of Catholicism and their sheep (many of which are named after deceased nuns). At night they tell fairy tales and knit (their own hair as well as wool). The scene is lusciously set with the language of snail, blood, guts, sensation.

Then one day something unusual happens. "Smell with me," sniffs Iphigenia who soon identifies the yeasty, custardy scent as that of a man. A young priest duly arrives, carting a mobile phone and a plan to turn the area into a resort. The nuns respond by shearing him, plastering his legs together, giving him a tail and placing him in the sheep-pen.

It is a wild, wacky and literary tale that follows and it is almost impossible to match anything but the literary bit to the woman sitting before me. Marele Day is quiet, sophisticated and tells her own story in a soft Australian accent. "I was making quite a nice little living on my detective stories; people knew me and I'd be going round doing this and that," she says "But this idea just

wouldn't go away. I thought it was wacky too but I was also quite intrigued."

She decided the only thing to do was write it and so started work. This involved a lot of research as she knew very little about sheep - "Sydney has a population of four million people and not a sheep in sight - and is not Catholic. It's always said that you should write what you know but I prefer to choose something I don't know anything about."

Then she had a little lie-down. "A lot of the work is done lying on the couch, day-dreaming. The first shocking idea I had was about them knitting their hair. I thought, that is so gross. Then I thought: why is that so gross? We are quite happy to wear animal hair on our backs. Why do we feel revolted by human hair? Then I thought about blood. Catholicism is a cannibalistic religion - in the Eucharist you symbolically drink blood and eat flesh and Christians all over the world do this every Sunday. So why not real blood? What's so extreme about that if you don't have wine?"

"Of course once you've had one shocking idea, well... The next one was putting the priest in plaster. It horrified me and I wondered if they might kill him. I started out not knowing where I was going to end up."

"I had some kind of experience writing this book that I've

not had with the other four. I can't even articulate it. I think that other writers call it being in The Zone. It's like when you are a marathon runner and you get to the point where you are not aware of yourself as a single entity and you're in the race and you are part of the running. It was like that. It sounds a bit weird but it all comes alive and suddenly you are actually in that world."

When she emerged, the book was finished and another drama began. This one was financial. In one week last October the book was "auctioned" to publishers in Australia and three other countries. All were healthy five-figure and six-figure deals and she speaks of it all with a kind of awe.

"The week began on Sunday night with news from Germany. There was this fax and I was just counting the noughts! And the results of the UK auction came on a Wednesday night, and then US came on the Friday morning and then 20 minutes later the phone rang and it was a Hollywood film agent. I was reeling, reeling. All I could do was go into the garden and pick weeds. I was stupefied."

Her first reaction to the Hollywood phone call was that it must be a friend playing a trick. But it wasn't. Jerry Kulajian is very much the real thing and he was calling because the word was out about this hot

book. "Lots of agents were after Marele," he says when I ring him in L.A. But what, exactly, is the attraction to this strange story?

"I'll tell you what I love about this," says Jerry. "I love the oestrogen. I love it. That's what made this book work for me."

Marele takes up the story again, carefully picking her way through the jargon. "So then he tells me we are giving it to Winona Ryder. He says that Winona is wrapping *Allen &* and that it might take a while. But he rang me back within a week and said 'Winona's in'. She's co-producing with Fox 2000. When Variety ran the story the headline was 'Fox grabs Lambs!'"

Marele is now in a travelling phase - she has had bouts of these throughout her life - and she has just an inkling of what may become her next book. "My life has just burst open. There are so many choices as to what I could do now. I had a nice minimalist life before - a life that I enjoyed - but now it has simply burst open and I'm in a stage of deciding what to do next. If anybody has any ideas, I'd be happy to hear them." Somehow I don't think that is going to be a problem.

'Lambs of God' by Marele Day is published by Anchor at £9.99.

ANDREW BROWN

The others will have bare feet, the Queen will wear white socks

The Queen faces an awkward problem as she approaches the Golden Temple in Amritsar later this month. It is not whether to apologise for the massacre there in 1919, when British troops fired on a peaceful demonstration and killed 379 people. It is not even whether to mention the more recent killings there, when Indian army troops fought their way into the holiest shrine of Sikhism, killing a thousand people. It is whether she should wear socks.

The Golden Temple, like all Sikh gurdwaras, may not be profaned with shoes. This is a general rule in Eastern religions: shoes are not worn in mosques or Hindu temples. Everyone, whether monarch or Archbishop of Canterbury, removes his shoes on entry. The trouble comes with socks: though religiously acceptable to wear them in a temple, can it ever be sartorially correct to wear them on a state visit?

If Her Majesty takes my advice, she will shun socks: there are recesses of my self-esteem still quivering from the day 23 years ago when a friend was married in the Woking Mosque, and I realised too late that I had donned odd socks that morning: one bright orange and the other viridian. All through the ceremony I found people looking at me; and looked down in embarrassment, only to find that in place of a pair of reassuring, non-judgmental shoes, there were these screaming colours accusing me of pretentiousness at the top of their voices.

There are entire Royal households arranged to prevent such things happening to Queens, but you can never be quite certain. I imagine there is some noble, fitted by centuries of breeding to the post, who is keeper of the Queen's sock drawer. Perhaps the post is given to the youngest child of the Mistress of the Wardrobe - it would be cheaper than a dukedom. But is the man ready for his task on October 15, when the Queen will visit the temple? Will he not be weakened by years of purely ceremonial duties, like the Welsh Guards on board Sir Galahad, and crumple when told to select the socks that all the world will see? The strain, the responsibility, are too much for anyone to bear. Besides, the Golden Temple is not designed for socks. The floors are marble, and there are ample foot-washing facilities.

Yet can Her Majesty appear without socks? The last time a member of the royal family had her toes photographed does not make an encouraging omen. Could the mystique of royalty survive the sight of a 70-year-old pair of bare feet, even if no Sikh socks them? Kitty Kelley may have made a fortune by inviting us into the confidences of the royal gynaecologist but I don't think that there will be much demand for the privileged viewpoint of the royal chiropodist.

Socks are safer. Pondering these matters, Her Majesty's advisers must surely have considered, and rejected, the option of tights. Even if she knows what they are - and I find it difficult to imagine that the monarchy has modernised itself to such an extent that she does - they are lethal on marble floors. One slip and you're sitting on your royal arse, surrounded by the ruins of a state visit.

The preferred compromise is that Her Majesty should wear white socks, while no one else in the party does. These discussions are still shrouded in secrecy, as her socks will be. It is all rather sad, especially when you consider what a simple solution was available to the foreign office in its difficult negotiations with the Temple authorities: we could simply have sent Tony Blair instead, and watched him dodge stuffy old protocol as he ran boyish and dry-shod across the surrounding lake, then walked through the temple, his shoes a reverent inch above the ground.

Madly in love: how Nicola Pagett's infatuation tipped over into obsession

Yesterday it emerged that the Prime Minister's press secretary had been the object of Nicola Pagett's erotomaniac obsession. Glenda Cooper analyses.

"I fell in love with The Stranger's face. I looked at a man's face and into his eyes on a screen and I believed him. If it doesn't begin it can never end." That's what I wrote to him.

So Nicola Pagett, the former *Upstairs Downstairs* actress, bravely chronicles in her autobiography the beginning of her descent into obsessive mania depression as she falls in love and becomes obsessed with a man she sees on TV whom she nicknames "The Stranger".

Yesterday it was claimed that The Stranger was in fact the Prime Minister's press secretary, Alastair Campbell. As

her disorder worsened, Pagett wrote hundreds of letters to him, sent him a cheque for £500 signed "Moi" and under the delusion that it was his instruction, falsely accused her husband of having an incestuous relationship with their 15-year-old daughter and feeding her heroin.

Psychologists agree that the roots of obsession are to be found in all of us. "There is a normal side to this," says Professor Petriska Clarkson, consultant psychologist and author. "When you first fall in love you can't think of anything else but the other person and what they are doing."

But for some, infatuation becomes obsession - and when the object of your desires is a famous person it is particularly potent. Helena Bonham Carter, Madonna and Monica Seles have all had to take action to cope with obsessed fans. At the most serious level, John Hinckley shot President

Reagan to impress film star Jodie Foster, and John Lennon was killed by Mark Chapman.

Little is known about delusional disorders - although delusions are common symptoms in schizophrenia and manic depression (Pagett's disorder) - people can exhibit delusional erotomania with no other symptoms. "Otherwise they lead a perfectly normal life," says Dr David Nias, a clinical psychologist at the University of London, who feels that because of a paucity of research we often have difficulty diagnosing the disorder.

But what is the appeal of the famous? "If you're going to have a fantasy lover, you're going to go for someone famous because you simply want the best," reasons Dr Nias. "Famous people have got something going for them - they're beautiful, successful and powerful, not the shabbily dressed people we see every day."

Professor Clarkson, who has



Nicola Pagett and Alastair Campbell. He became the focus of her existence

specialised in the psychology of celebrity added: "Famous people represent for us our dreams, our hopes, our aspiration, our wishes, our fantasies. People project their aspirations onto the famous and make them larger than life. It's a very, very complex relationship."

"Famous people are the carriers of our projections. We aspire to be like them - we

would like to be as beautiful, successful, acclaimed as they are. That's the positive side. The negative side is that people invest in the famous so much that they cannot live their own lives. They become a vicarious projection for us. And in cases like those of John Lennon and Jodie Foster it can become very destructive."

Their sheer recurrent visi-



That's what we went through with Diana. Someone said: 'I've seen more pictures of Diana than I'll ever see of my mother.'

What makes people progress from the harmless crush to full-blown obsession and delusion is difficult to say, but Professor Clarkson believes that it is a combination of predisposition, the environment in which you grew up and life stressors you may be experiencing. On top of that, many are more vulnerable after suffering a loss. "People who have lost a child or suffered a shock or a bereavement - the delusion can serve to fill the space."

Someone who has suffered an obsession is the radio disc jockey Mike Read. He was the subject of the attentions of a woman who has now changed her name to Blue Tulip Rose Read and believes she is married to him. He says he copes with those who have pursued him by trying to distance him-

self from it. "It comes with the job, but lots of jobs have far worse downsides. It doesn't really bother me, although it can be disturbing when you're eating lunch and realise that people are watching you. Or they send photographs of your driveway and you realise they've been there and been all over your house while you were out. I think you just have to keep remembering that it's not their fault. They are not bad people."

Dr Nias thinks that more research must be done into delusional disorders so that we can begin to understand and treat them.

For someone suffering from delusions it's like the most important love affair ever," says Dr Nias. "The pre-occupation of being in love is the tragedy of it. What should be the most fantastic experience of your life ends up being the most tragic."

The 'global player' who was too British for Wall Street



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The collapse of BT's ambition to be the world's leading phone company matters to all of us, not because it will affect the price of a phone call (it probably won't, much), but because it raises the question of whether Britain needs companies which are global players to succeed in the global economy. Is what is good for BT good for Britain? This is a large question, and the cancellation of the merger between BT and the American giant MCI requires Labour's modernisers to clarify the answers they have given so far.

Five years ago now, Gordon Brown set out the principles of what he called the New Economics. Drawing heavily on the thinking of Robert Reich, President Clinton's first Labor Secretary, he then shadow chancellor argued that nations could only "add value" by the skill, ingenuity and enterprise of their workforces. Mr Reich's premise was that the large companies which dominate capitalism are footloose and unpatriotic: they owe no loyalty to a

country, and will pursue the maximisation of profit regardless of national boundaries. A company could be headquartered in Detroit or London, carry out all its manufacturing in Korea or Vietnam, do its accounting in India and hold its accounts in the Cayman Islands. The only way in such a global economy for the government of one nation to develop a competitive advantage and retain the benefits for its people is to improve their skills, because workers are less mobile than capital and corporations. This was a new style of thinking for the centre-left, and for New Labour it provided the intellectual rationale for the abandonment of Bennite "socialism in one country" a decade earlier. But it was highly simplistic, and in key respects – as the BT/MCI debacle shows – simply wrong.

The fact that MCI has been swooped upon by a rival American company, WorldCom, is suggestive of the chauvinism of American finance. It turns out that

the free market is not as blind to borders as Mr Reich thought. The idea that a huge American telephone company should be taken over by a foreign one – never mind that BT speaks English – did not appeal to Wall Street. The New York markets preferred one of their own, the fast-talking Bernard Ebbers, whose WorldCom may be a quarter the size of BT, but which was more or less created as a corporate vehicle by the Manhattan investment banks.

Strategically, Mr Ebbers is pursuing the same vision as BT's Sir Iain Vallance, one of Tony Blair's favourite business leaders. Mr Ebbers says he wants MCI in order to build a global player in a world telecoms market which will be dominated by a small number of mega-corporations. That was Sir Iain's cunning plan, too, but it seems that international finance – that is, predominantly American finance – is prepared to gear up the cash for it if the global player wears an American shirt.

Messrs Brown and Blair cannot com-

plain too loudly, however, because they never really believed in the full version of Robert Reich's analysis. In practice, a strong streak of British nationalism has run through their relations with business. They did not like it when Rover was sold to BMW, and although they have embraced the slogans of Conservative orthodoxy in the matter of "not picking winners" they have promoted the global ambitions of both BT and British Airways. The similarities between the two cases are instructive: telecoms and airlines are two industries which are still emerging from state control and national regulation, and which have been strongly influenced by the rebirth of the "big is beautiful" doctrine in business.

In the case of BT, it was Labour, not the Tories, which accepted the argument that less competition at home was a price worth paying for a "global player" wearing a British shirt. Mr Blair referred again, in his big speech this week, to his deal with

BT to get every school on to the information superhighway. For him, it seems, BT is our General Motors, and there is an identity of interests between company and corporation. That may smack of Fifties corporatism, but there is as much truth in it as in the Reich model: BT is a British company, with a British workforce and a physical network in this country which may be part of a global network, but which anchors it here.

The question then is: what is good for BT? There were sufficient doubts about the MCI merger to suggest that it was in the interest of BT shareholders and customers to call it off. Mr Blair's mistake lay not in his support for BT, but in backing a strategy for the company which was over-ambitious, reflecting Sir Iain's lust for a leading role on the world stage. It is not surprising that Mr Blair felt an affinity with him, but politicians should stay on the right side of the line between picking winners and backing proven success.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor
and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax 0171 293 2096; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address.
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Cost of night surgery

Sir: Your report "Night shift surgeons will cut the wait" (29 September) implies that it is the trust hospitals that are struggling to meet waiting lists. While some trusts may indeed be behind on contract, the real root of the problem is the failure to provide adequate resources to enable NHS hospitals to meet their local needs.

This is because most purchasing authorities are themselves cash-strapped and many first wave GP fund-holders seem intent on diverting NHS resources away from NHS hospitals and into the private sector. The problem arose because the previous government chose to expend millions supporting an internal pseudo-market with all the attendant management costs, rather than spend it on direct patient care. While the new government is keen to cut "red tape", it will not achieve this by amalgamating trusts if it does not first amalgamate purchasing authorities and rationalise the waste of resources there.

A disproportionate number of staff appear to have been channelled into primary care. While some of these health prevention measures may take 30 years to take effect, people still need their hernias and gall-bladders operated on.

The Rapid Response Unit in Bradford last year showed the way forward. Vast numbers of patients can be processed, with all grades of staff being remunerated reasonably for use of their spare time. But at the end of the day creating additional capacity in the evenings or weekends costs extra money.

Is the Government equal to the task of reversing unnecessary consumption in managerial terms, halting the exodus of cash into the private sector and as a result giving all our NHS hospitals what they need to provide an effective, sustainable capacity to meet the growing long-term need?

Dr PETER KNAPPETT
Director of Critical Care
Bradford Royal Infirmary

Sir: As a former clinical director of theatre services, I was intrigued to read your report on the possibility of operating around the clock (29 September). Although it is very tempting to "sweat the assets" of an

expensive, high-tech resource, such an approach is not possible in the current economic climate for a number of reasons.

First, there are not enough beds to put the patients in. Secondly, there are significant problems with retention and recruitment of appropriately qualified theatre personnel. Thirdly, it is doubtful that there would be sufficient numbers of anaesthetists to cover the sessions and finally, there are not enough surgeons to go round.

There is no doubt that it makes sense to make more efficient use of a very expensive facility – a notion that might be expanded to the development of "twilight" clinics or more extensive weekend working. To pursue this path, however, without addressing the need for extra resources is short-sighted in the extreme.

GRAEME URWIN, FRCS
Consultant Urological Surgeon
York

Workplace tragedies

Sir: We were delighted to read *The Independent's* front page report about disasters and corporate killing (2 October).

Many of our members have been directly affected by these terrible tragedies and others. Twenty thousand people have been killed in workplace accidents and disasters in the 30 years since the Aberfan tragedy and there has been only one successful prosecution for corporate manslaughter. The present situation, which treats corporate financial crime more seriously than corporate negligence, is intolerable.

The Law Commission's proposals for new offences of corporate killing are an important step forward in our campaign for greater corporate responsibility. The detail of the proposals is still being reviewed; we would additionally like to see consideration given to the powers and

actions of the investigative teams and to sentencing policy. We look forward to a time when a corporation's actions are tempered by the knowledge that it will be held fully responsible for the consequences, a situation society already expects of individuals. We hope that the Government gives parliamentary time to convert its good intentions into legislation.

PAMELA DIX
Vice-Chairman
Disaster Action
Woking, Surrey

Roots of violence

Sir: Abdul Hakim Murad (letter, 25 September) claims that there is no "Ulster-style religious violence" between religious groups in Malaysia.

I had the pleasure of sharing a flat with three non-Muslim Malaysians for a year. One was ethnically Chinese, and the other two were Christian Bums from Sarawak state. While there is currently no such violence in Malaysia that I know of, that doesn't mean that there won't be. Inter-group strife is based on inter-group intolerance and discrimination, and my flatmates seemed to feel that this was the way of things in "confidently Muslim" Malaysia.

Many of Mr Murad's points were well taken, but I suspect he is falling into the trap shared by the powerful all over the world. As a white South African, I have seen at close

range the arrogance that makes it all too easy to believe that there is no problem in the powerful exercising their power to exclude those not of their own tribe from the status of equal in human importance. Such people can often be heard complaining bitterly when they wake up in the middle of an era of Ulster-style violence, and cannot understand that the roots of the day's events lie in their own actions and inaction in the past.

CHRIS HIGH
Sutton St Nicholas
Herefordshire

Class barriers

Sir: Because people change classes ("Barriers break as Britain embraces upward mobility", 25 September) does not mean that class is dead. It is alive and is the decisive influence on a Briton's chances in life.

To be born on a run-down council estate and educated at a comprehensive, where the teachers are condemned to cope with the consequences of generations of social neglect and damned when they fail, is a ticket to a life in the underclass.

The few who make it up the greasy pole are to be admired, but their success does not affect the fate of their contemporaries.

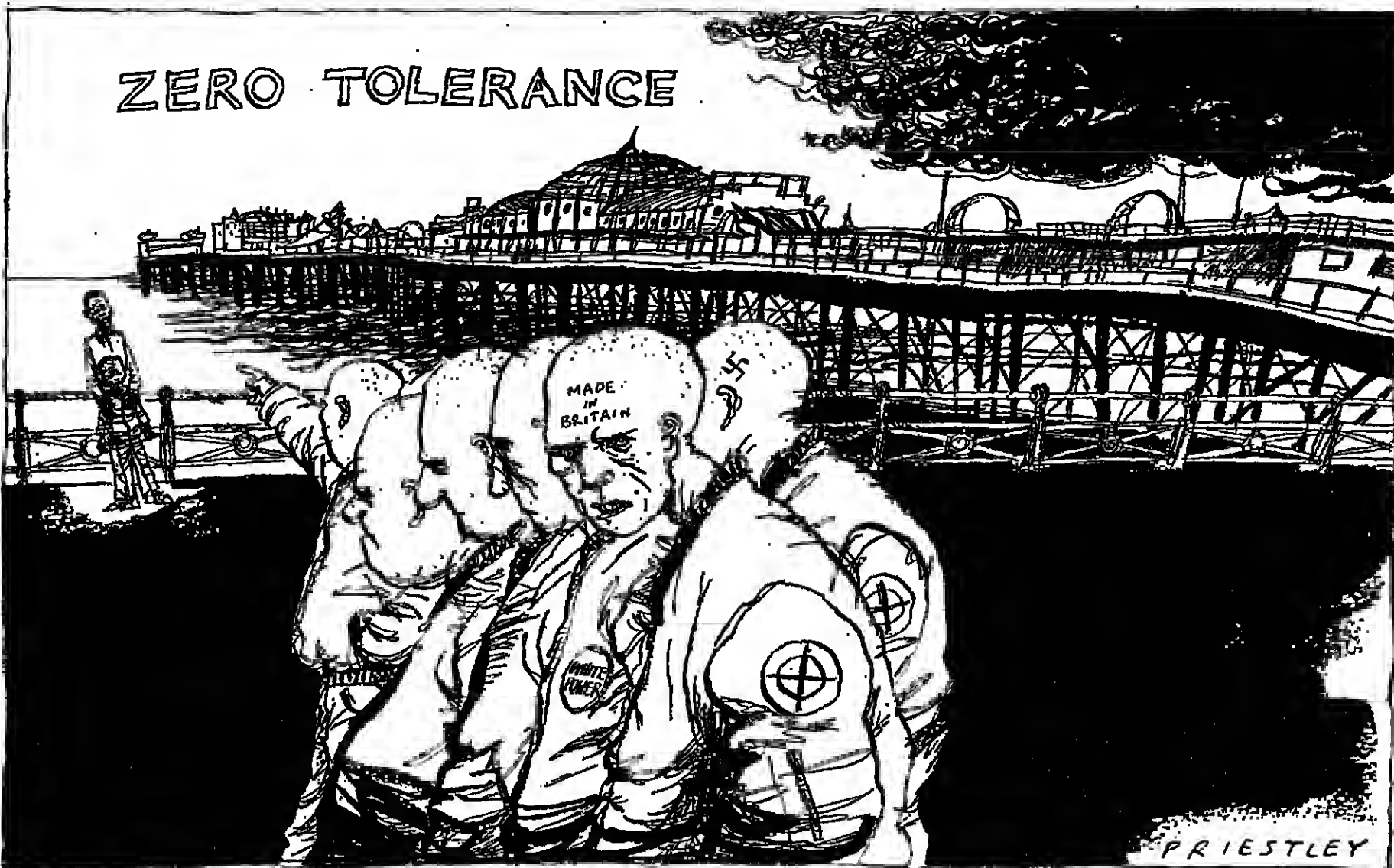
D S HOSKINS
Edinburgh

Child sexual abuse
Sir: Your two articles on child sexual abuse (1 October) pose something of a conundrum. Psychiatrists argue about the validity of recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse ("Abuse claims may be false memories") whilst thousands of paedophiles are apparently advertising on the Internet.

Sheltered policy
Sir: I stood yesterday waiting for the Number 53 bus to take me home to Cheltenham. I shared my wait with a large, slow-moving, tail-to-tail traffic jam and, to my dismay, a rather larger, but not so slow-moving, dark grey, bulging cloud.

When the Government finally gets round to sorting its "fully integrated transport policy", I do hope they don't forget the bus shelters!

SIMON J HIGSON
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire



Psychiatrists have a long history of failing to come to terms with the reality of child sexual abuse. In 1895, Freud published a paper suggesting that much adult neurosis had its roots in childhood sexual trauma. The next year he radically revised this view, arguing that the histories he was receiving were fantasies. In doing so, many of us would argue that he put back the cause of the sexually abused by almost a century.

In my own very ordinary general practice using no special techniques, hypnosis or leading questions, many adult patients have told me harrowing stories about their own childhood sexual abuse.

They are usually disclosing this for the first time many years after the event with no intention of punishing the abuser – who is often dead anyway – but are wishing to begin to come to terms with the misery, shame and pain they have lived with all their lives.

They do not expect to be believed, sensing that society reacts with horror to the notion that apparently normal parents or relatives could ever assault their children in such a devastating way.

Some studies have shown that as many as 50 per cent of psychiatric in-patients have a history of childhood sexual abuse, but many psychiatrists refute this and when such a history is offered they either ignore it or, worse still, deny its reality.

As doctors we must let those who have been sexually abused know that we believe their experiences are rooted in reality and do not simply exist in cyberspace.

Dr KEVIN ILSLEY
Bromyard, Herefordshire

I met an antique salesman in Notting Hill, who tried to charge me £45 for a book ...



MILES KINGTON

For a long time I lived in Notting Hill near Portobello Road, and discovered what many weekend visitors never discover – that the life of Portobello Road is not limited to the Saturday antiques market. There is an active fruit and veg market all week long. There are many specialist shops, selling jazz records or bicycles. And quite a few of the antique shops stay open during the week as well.

It was in one of these that I spotted a novel I wanted to buy. It's unusual to find books in antique shops, but this particular one had a large bookcase full of them. Maybe the man had initially bought the bookcase then started filling the case with books; maybe he had bought some furniture at an auction and

the books had come with it; whatever the reason, he had a case full of books and one of them was the novel I wanted to buy. I can't remember what it was called. It was one of those obscure Victorian novels by female authors called "Mrs" on the spine, and the only reason I wanted to buy it was that, attracted by its handsome leather binding, I had dipped into it and found it quite amusing.

The price was not negotiable, being written in that antique trade shorthand which allows the seller to utter any price he wishes. The price the owner uttered was £45.

"£45!" I spluttered. "It's hardly worth £10. This woman is a forgotten author. This novel is a forgotten novel. Nobody would want to buy this."

"I'm pricing it for the binding," he said. "Don't care about the book. Might be *The Good Hotel Guide 1886*, for all I care."

"Well, I'm making you an offer for the reading matter," I said. "I'll give you £20."

"£20?" The fact that the man didn't even come down a bit indicated that he didn't like the look of me and didn't want his book to fall into the hands of someone who was going to sell the pages with his eyes. So I departed. What the man didn't know was that I lived just around the corner, so every time I went that way to get fruit and veg, or my bike mended, or a specialist jazz record, I used to pop in to the bookshop to look at the book, by which I

mean read it. There is no law against reading a book in a bookshop. It's just time-consuming, that's all. My daughter used to work in the Travel Bookshop just down the road, and she said it was not uncommon for people to come in with pen and paper to plan their holidays, getting down all the guide books, copying out the relevant data, and leaving without a word of thanks ...

By reading a few pages at a time I gradually got well into the book, which was not nearly as bad as it might have been, and it got to the stage where I could not always remember where I had read to, so I actually left a white ticket in the book as a book mark. I don't think I have ever done this before or since, but you must remember that I was

doing this as much in protest against the exorbitant price as in order to read the book.

The process of reading was accompanied by haggling as well. Every time I went in and read a chunk, I would say, "How much is this?" and he would tell me the price. The price started to change. He came down to £40, then £35. My offer, however, did not rise to meet his in the time-honoured way of haggling. I thought I had started too high at £20, so I started putting my offer down as well, and we got to a stage where he was asking £30 and I was down to £12.

I think this was the point at which he started his guerrilla warfare. It wasn't very serious. He merely started moving the book around to different places

so that I couldn't find it. This was hopeless, as there was only the one bookcase in the shop. Then he started moving my bookmark around in the book, sometimes trying to kid me that I had only read 50 pages, sometimes trying to convince me that I was nearly at the end, I never got upset by this. I merely flipped through the book until I found the right spot, and started using a secondary bookmark, a tiny toothpick, which he never spotted. He kept on moving the bus ticket around, while I went straight to my toothpick.

Came the day when I finally finished the book, at which point you might think that I would call off my visits. Not at all. I had come to enjoy my little invasions so much, and the half-hearted haggling, that I still

called in to look at the book and to shift the bookmark around. By the time the notice appeared in the shop window "Closing Down Sale – Everything Must Go" I had got him down to £20, and was offering £5.

"You're moving?" I said. "Going out of town," he replied tersely. Tensely was how he always conversed.

"You never did sell that binding," I said. "Pity you couldn't find a taker."

He took it down and looked at it. Then, with great pain, he spoke. "You can have it for a fiver." I took it from his hands and stroked the pages. The book for which I had been prepared to pay £20 – now mine for a fiver! "No, thanks," I said. "I've already read it."

Sing the cosy old tunes –
then get down to businessDONALD
MACINTYRE
BLAIR'S
PROGRESS

Earlier this week in a tennis club close to Brighton, three innocently changing sportsmen were astounded to come face to face with a near naked Tony Blair freshly sweating from the courts. With a nonchalant wave of his hand the – currently – most popular leader in the developed world said a diffident “Hi, guys” and stepped into the shower. Utterly stunned, the unplanned reception committee let towels and bars of soap slip to the floor as they stared like zombies at the prime ministerial apparition. At least one recovered sufficiently to utter a strangled “All right, mate”. What they said when they got home, and if anyone believed them, is not recorded.

For all the trappings of power, Tony Blair isn't at all behaving like the presidential figure his Tory critics claim he wants to be. He is in high good humour, confident and focused as ever. But *folie de grandeur* is not among his faults. Those who have talked to him privately say that, far from letting his astonishing poll ratings go to his head, he regards them as unreal, almost depressing. He continues to warn his colleagues, first, that the conference message of “hard choices” ahead means the Government is bound to grow much less popular in the coming months. Second, he cautions that the Government's popularity only counts when it reflects a solid record of achievement. And he believes the party understands that better at the end of the week than at the beginning.

It isn't that difficult to amass evidence to the contrary. The union leaders who queued up after Gordon Brown's speech to press for big pay settlements showed every sign of failing to absorb the Chancellor's blunt message that the Government would ruthlessly put control of inflation and spending above the demands for pay increases; help for those without jobs in preference to rises for those who have them.

The national executive elections have been greeted by the left as evidence of its increased popularity within the party. The standing ovation for Barbara Castle's attack on the Government's pensions policy on Wednesday symbolises the extent to which the old-time religion of Labour still strikes a chord with the faithful. All big strikes of the Cabinet, Gordon Brown, John Prescott and Robin Cook, used language on occasions that shamelessly played to those old Labour susceptibilities.

Superficially then, you can make a strong argument that the party hasn't really changed. But the counter-case is stronger. First, in whatever the language they clothed it, the messages from Prescott and Brown were uncompromisingly modernising. Prescott's big speech of the week, a hum-

storming demolition of the case for renationalising RailTrack, showed the Deputy Prime Minister at his formidable best in championing Blair's approach to government. The Mo Mowlams, the Harriet Harman, the David Blunkett, the Jack Cunningham, the Jack Straws made speeches which were thoroughly New Labour in form as well as content.

There will be a reshuffle, perhaps as late as next summer, perhaps earlier. When it does happen, some ministers will leave the Cabinet and perhaps the Government. But Blair is impressed by his most talented and decisive ministers. And the union leaders, who anyway show rather more understanding of the realities of government policy in private chats with ministers than, tiresomely, they do in public, are making a big mistake if they think for a second that Brown and his rising chief secretary, Alister Darling, will regard this week's conference as other than a mandate for the toughest of approaches to public sector pay. Whatever the turbulence it causes.

There is also rather less to the NEC results than meets the eye. Skinner is a genuinely popular figure in the party, a lovable fragment of its heritage. Blair's own constituency of Sedgefield voted for Skinner. But if it thought that Skinner was coming within a mile of influencing the direction of the government Sedgefield would be utterly horrified. It also remains clear that the anti-Mandelson vote was not anti-modernisation. Blair told Mandelson some time before the ballot results that he thought it would be good for him if he lost. He certainly regarded the endless publicity his trusted lieutenant attracted over August as a real problem, believing that it would have been better for Mandelson to fight, if he was going to fight at all, simply on his record in an outstanding election campaign. He meant everything he said on Wednesday about Mandelson's talents. But he also made it clear to him that humility, dealing with people, and not becoming the story, matter too. If Mandelson learns this lesson he should have the career ahead of him implied by Blair on Wednesday.

Blair is confident, not without reason, that the party, especially but not exclusively its swelled ranks of younger members, continued to warm to him this week. This is not just because of the size of the victory but because he feels they like hearing a leader who expresses enduring Labour goals in language which speaks to those without tribal roots in Labour. There is every sign that the party still likes listening to the old music hall tunes. But there's also every sign that's what members increasingly, however affectionately, regard them as: music hall tunes.

On Tuesday, Blair struck a series of bargains not only with his party but with the wider electorate: to take two prime examples, health and education will get, in the long run, the funds they need. But the price will be real reform, of delivery standards, of administration, of structure. Bad teachers will be sacked, education authorities bypassed, precious demarcations between health service professionals painfully eradicated. There will be anguish inside Labour as well as outside it. Rivalries and tension within the Cabinet, already being exacerbated by competition for scarce resources as well as conflicts of personality, will undoubtedly increase. The going will be rough. There is turbulence ahead. Seatbelts should be fastened now. But Blair is confident the flightpath is now clear.



Not just poor, but an 'underclass', spoken of as if they were an entirely different species, a lumpen mass

Photograph: Craig Easton

King Tony, look over the palace gates

SUZANNE
MOORE
ON LABOUR
DO-GOODING

For some time I have been expecting the announcement. Clearly Charles is too old and William is too young and there is no other viable option. I can just see Blair, humility oozing from every pore, his voice cracking with emotion, telling conference: “Aw, guys, you know I never really wanted to do this but as the people have spoken, I guess it's my duty. Yes, I will become King.” The coronation of the Lion King cannot be far off and King Tony, the moderniser's moderniser, may as well become monarch if we believe what we read in the papers.

Actually I am hoping that the New Downing Street Social Exclusion Unit does home visits to us because I feel socially and spiritually excluded from not only the style but the contents of this week's conference. Only three things have cheered me up: Tony Blair's crimes against good taste; Mandelson's little disappointment; and the fact that the only person who finds Alastair Campbell attractive is a paranoid manic depressive in the grip of a wild delusion.

With the media largely operating as cheerleaders for the Government, it is easy enough to think that the people's politician holds the nation in his hands, that, though there may be the odd hiccup, everything is going to plan. Is this really the case? The overwhelming relief that the Tories have given is being read as overwhelming support for everything this Labour government does. But it is not the same thing at all.

There is a strong sense of politics happening elsewhere. Even the TV pundits seem to admit it. After Diana they are less smug than before about what really matters...

“I'll be asking Mark Mardell [Newsnight's political correspondent] why he bothers,” declared a languid Paganini in a TV studio in Brighton this week. He was referring to the lack of conflict at the conference. This could be spun as a sign of the new inclusive politics. After all, isn't it an indication of maturity that we all now agree with each other and the Government about everything?

Well, no it isn't. For while the popular will and “the people” are invoked over and over again, this is a process taking place from the top down and not the bottom up.

This is nowhere more evident than in the discussions about poverty, about which we are all suddenly dreadfully concerned. The language of these discussions is entirely that of Charles Murray “underclass” theory. He made no secret of the fact that the underclass were scum. So now instead of poor people being people without enough money we now talk confidently of the underclass as though they were

an entirely different species, a lumpen mass. They live in “anti-social neighbourhoods”, according to Blair's speech, and they are just desperate for a bit of do-gooding.

Murray also wrote of the rise of “the rabble” and the “New Victorians” and there is something horribly Victorian about the way in which these debates on poverty proceed: “the poor” may at times be divided into hite-size chunks – single mothers, pensioners, the long-term unemployed – but there remains little understanding of the poor as people, let alone citizens.

Work – low-paid, part-time, unstimulating work – is the great cure-all. From work, we are expected to believe everything else will flow – self-esteem, educational achievement, a more stable family life. Yet it is the changing nature of work that is largely responsible for the breakdown of older forms of family life in the first place.

The fundamental changes that have resulted in the negotiation between men and women of new roles for themselves isn't being addressed. Talking of “the poor” or “the underclass” also ignores the play of gender throughout our lives. Women move in and out of poverty in different ways from men because their relationship to the employment market is not the same.

Yet for all this government's “radicalism”, the parameters of this debate are very narrow. Redistribution, already ruled out, is only ever talked of in terms of the tax system. There are other ways to look at this. Many of these ideas are coming from outside the Labour Party which, while preaching self-sufficiency,

exists alongside a realm where these ideals are actually practised – namely, DIY, direct-action politics. Those involved in such politics are doing the things the Government talks of so wistfully. They are trying to take responsibility and control over their lives and many of them have the time to do so precisely because they are unemployed.

Some of “the people” invoked so many times this week by the Labour Party will have little faith in this government or any government to represent them. That does not mean they do not recognise that many issues that will impact on their lives will be decided by Parliament. It's just that they cannot accept that the only agenda worth having is the one set by the Government, even, praise their souls, this one. Money in your pocket contributes to the quality of life but other things such as fulfilling work, a clean environment and a lively community also figure in surveys that ask people what defines a decent standard of living.

Denise Searle's book, *Gathering Force: DIY Culture – Radical Action for those tired of waiting*, sees the issue of land as “the underlying factor lurking beneath the surface of many single issues” from homelessness to the rebuilding of communities to the loss of public space to the destruction of the countryside, the insecurity of home-

owners facing negative equity. “Access to land for living, providing food and recreation is an essential determinant of our quality of life, yet about 75 per cent of British land is owned by 1 per cent of its people.” The reclaiming of land, even temporarily, is a vital part of DIY culture which does not bother waiting for such redistribution from on high.

Thankfully “the rabble” itself is generating ideas about how to deal with poverty from Local Economy Trading Systems (LETS), credit unions in areas where no bank would dare to venture and neighbourhood food supply networks. They are not waiting for policies to be handed out to them but rather create their own policies, to force a response from the Government. The underclass as a forum for ideas and debate and radical action – now there's a queer notion in the court of King Tony.

There is more than one kind of solution and more than one way of talking about “the poor”. Compassion will not stop the effects of globalisation. But something has got to give in this giving era and if you want to include people you might have to actually talk to them. Instead of talking down to them, still that is what governments are for and we all know, don't we, that you only talk down to those you assume won't answer back?

CRISIS IN NORTH KOREA (DPRK)

Your
£30 can
keep
two
children alive

Severe flooding – and now a drought – have left thousands of North Korean children on the brink of starvation.

In the nurseries and kindergartens of Suncheon City, food has virtually run out. Working alongside the North Korean authorities, Children's Aid Direct has already delivered desperately needed food.

Now, as the crisis deepens, it is vital that more food packages reach the children. But we need your help to do it.

Each food package costs £30 and contains enough high energy food to keep two children safe until the next harvest in October. So please, send as much as you can, to help keep the children alive. Thank you.

I'M SENDING MY £30 FOOD PACKAGE NOW

Here is my gift of:
☐ £30 ☐ £60 ☐ £90 ☐ £250* Your amount £
 *A gift of £250 or more is worth almost an extra third to us under Gift Aid
 Please make your cheque payable to Children's Aid Direct OR
 Please debit £ from my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Switch
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 OR please phone our donation line
 0990 600 610
 Please send to: Children's Aid Direct
 Dept No. 525, FREEPOST,
 Reading RG1 8Z2.
 Registered Charity No. 803236

The message is: 'Washington to Planet Earth, Get Lost'

RUPERT
CORNWELL
AMERICAN
ARROGANCE

Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. The third time is enemy action. So wrote the late Ian Fleming, and so may the rest of us be forgiven for thinking, when contemplating a few of the latest manifestations of US foreign policy. To the untrained eye, the James Bond superpower which delights in identifying villains on the international stage (“rogue states” as they are known in State Department vernacular) is behaving exactly like one itself.

For proof, consider not three, but four recent examples. Powerful lobbies in Washington could yet prevent the country signing – and thus destroy – the planned global climate treaty that would lower pollution emissions. Last month, American opposition may have consigned an international agreement to ban land-mines to a similar fate. Blending dollops of self-righteousness with pleas of impotence in the face of Congressional opposition, the US balks endlessly at paying its dues to the United Nations. Now it is in another minority of one, trying to extend the reach of its national laws to prevent the sovereign states of France, Russia and Malaysia signing a gas development deal with Iran.

Now, on each individual count apologists can mount a more or less plausible defence. After all, was not the European Commission at least as “extra-

territorial” when it demanded – and secured – changes in the merger between Boeing and McDonnell-Douglas, which surely was none of its business? Then again, is not an exemption justified for its mines guarding South Korea's borders with the North, arguably the most dangerous frontier on earth? Maybe international gases aren't responsible for global warming. And few would dispute America's complaints about bureaucracy and incompetence at the UN. Cumulatively, however, one overwhelming impression remains: “Washington to Planet Earth: Get Lost.”

In a sense of course, the sentiment is not entirely new. Famously, the opposite polar forces behind American foreign policy are idealism and isolationism, the alternating convictions that America must either mend the world, or stay out of it. Both flow from the doctrine of American “exceptionalism”, that it is a country unique in origin and conceived by God for a special moral, and moralising, purpose.

These days, moreover, the exceptionalism embraces economic, and the unqualified triumph, in US eyes at least, of the American model of hard-nosed free-market capitalism, so messianically and maddeningly proclaimed by President Clinton to his fellow heads of government at the recent G-7

summit in Denver. Strong growth, low inflation, high employment, innovative dynamism, US officials brag: you name it, we've got it. The dollar is strong and the Asian tigers have been de-fanged. And what's that fuss in Europe about budget deficits of 3 per cent? We're heading for a budget surplus in 1998. American exceptionalism? More like American arrogance.

If so, however, it is an arrogance born of weakness – not of the country's position in the world outside, but of its internal political system. Some of the frictions are inevitable. Led by America, the West won the Cold War – but that victory removed the overarching reason for Western solidarity. Once the ultimate guarantee of Europe's obedience to its patron superpower, the American nuclear umbrella is no longer of paramount importance. But the true problem lies within.

Today there is no such thing as a coherent American foreign policy, rather an abject series of gestures to various interest groups. This is not to demand what George Bush once plaintively called “the vision thing”, a strategic concept of world affairs, of Kissingerian sweep. But it does require an end to a policy of pandering, and Mr Clinton's reflex of acting to please the immediate audience. He may plead the problems of

divided government, a Democratic White House in intermittent but inevitable disagreement with a Republican Congress. That does not excuse him from demonstrating at least some willingness to take on vested interests, be they the Pentagon in the case of land-mines, the oil and energy industries over emissions, Republican obstinacy over the UN, and the Jewish lobby and sundry seekers of the Jewish vote over extraterritorial laws against Iran and Iraq. Hence too, in large measure, Washington's lockstep support for Israel in its dealings with the Palestinians – another irritant to most of its allies.

The saddest fact, however, is that America's certainty in its own wisdom is counter-productive, its power essentially destructive. To be sure, US objections can prevent things happening: if Washington does not go along, there is no prospect of a meaningful ban on land-mines or of global curbs on pollution that will bite. But the US cannot fashion events as it wishes, in defiance of geopolitical gravity.

One day the rest of the world's patience will surely be exhausted at paying America's bills at the UN, and at a Secretary of State's mixture of pleading and bullying, that “we're sorry we can't pay – but either shut up or put up”. In the

case of extraterritorial sanctions against “rogue states” (as if the State Department were the only valid judge of such offenders), the position is even clearer cut. They simply don't work. And the losers are not only the American companies whose competitors snap up exports and markets that were once their own.

Washington, too, suffers from policies that merely undermine their avowed goals. In Cuba, nothing has done more to keep Fidel Castro in power than the nationalism and anti-Americanism fuelled by 35 years of sanctions designed to unseat him. In going ahead with the gas agreement, France, Russia and Iran itself all gain strength from being perceived to stand up to American bullying. Small wonder that the Clinton Administration is groping for a face-saving formula that would avoid confrontation with old allies, and keep the door ajar for better relations with what may be a less antagonistic regime in Teheran.

Ever agile, Mr Clinton will doubtless find his formula. But old grudges between America and its allies are dissolving, to be replaced by new rivalries – over jobs and, probably, over the euro if the planned single currency challenges the dollar's supremacy in the world monetary arena. Today's events offer little hope of accommodation.

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J. G. Links

Joseph Gluckstein Links, art historian: born London, 13 December 1904; OBE 1944; married 1945 Mary Lutyens (one stepdaughter); died London 1 October 1997.

It is improbable that anyone who was self-taught today would be acknowledged by the art-history world as the expert in his field. Without any formal training, J. G. Links became the world expert on Canaletto, a notoriously difficult painter to date. Even though he thought of himself more as a cataloguer than an art historian, Links achieved this while maintaining total integrity, modesty and a delight in life.

Links found Canaletto "endlessly fascinating" and wrote several books about him; *Views of Venice* by Canaletto, engraved by Antonio Visentini, was published in 1971; *Canaletto in 1776*, and *Canaletto and his Patrons* in 1977. Links helped with the exhibition at the Queen's Gallery in 1980, where he was able to examine many Canalettos in detail for

the first time. The big Canaletto exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1980-81 was conceived by Links and made possible by his encyclopaedic knowledge; the loan of 70 paintings from private collections, many of which had never been seen in public, was due to his contacts and enthusiasm.

He was born in north London in 1904; his father was a Jewish refugee from Hungary who had started the fur business Calman Links. His mother died before he was 13 years old and he had to leave school aged 14; his father had become ill and wanted to teach him the fur trade before he died. "I was an unwilling and sullen pupil," he wrote, but he later appreciated not having to make a decision about a career. "There was the business and I jolly well had to go and earn my living at it."

Although he thought of himself as a bad salesman, he made the business more up-market: his father had mostly traded in skunk skins, eventually becoming a director of the Hudson's Bay Company and

gaining the royal warrant as the Queen's furrier. In 1956 Links wrote a book on the subject, *The Book of Fur*.

In the 1930s he published a series of crime dossiers with Dennis Wheatley, with whom he shared a love, and great knowledge, of fine German wine. These books, including *Herewith the Clues!* (1939) and *The Malinsay Massacre* (1938), with manually inserted "clues" for the reader, were phenomenally popular and were reissued in the 1980s.

During the Second World War Links was a Wing Commander in the RAF working on barrage balloons in the Air Ministry. Through his war work he met Robert Lutyens, son of the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, and through him his sister Mary, whom Links married in 1945. Their honeymoon was spent on a troopship going to New York. When his new wife objected to this as a rather unromantic honeymoon, they tried Venice as a more suitable option.

On this first visit to Venice they both became "hooked for

life". They followed in the footsteps of John Ruskin with *The Stones of Venice* and, after that, for 30 years went to Venice two or three times every year. In the late Sixties, Links became involved in the establishment of the Venice in Peril Fund, set up to help prevent the buildings of Venice from crumbling into its lagoon, and remained a prime mover and fund-raiser.

The interest which he developed in both Canaletto and Ruskin grew out of his passion for Venice; in 1962 Mary gave him a copy of W.G. Constable's new monograph on Canaletto in which Constable had noted a missing painting which Links recognised as the painting hanging over his sister-in-law's fireplace. He and Constable started a correspondence and, when Constable came to England, he asked Links whether he would take over the second edition of the book; it took him six years rather than the six months Constable had anticipated and *Canaletto* was published in 1976.

Links's friends constantly asked for advice before they went to Venice; he wrote them letters describing what to see and do, which, with his characteristic generosity, he enjoyed doing, until one friend, the publisher Max Reinhardt, of Bodley Head, suggested turning this advice into a book. So his best-loved book, *Venice for Pleasure* (1966), originated, described by Bernard Levin as "Not only the best guide-book to that city ever written, but the best guide-book to any city ever written". A fifth expanded edition was published in 1994. Links also wrote *The Ruskins in Normandy* (1968), *Townscape Painting and Drawing* (1972) and *Travellers in Europe* (1980).

He had an extremely happy

marriage; he and Mary were unfailingly polite to each other and she said of him, "He made me nice again." They loved working together and made a good team; he typed everything she wrote, wearing a short, black nylon jacket for his work. He built up an extraordinary collection of reference files and was endlessly curious, interested in everything, and took a great joy in life, even doing the Cresta Run on a bobsleigh.

Often, after dinner, they would read out loud to each other; he was a great fan of Raymond Chandler, but their literary and musical tastes were broad. He loved Mozart and knew Cole Porter, to whom they would dance, by heart. Links was very keen on good food and wine and both he and Mary were famous for their dry Martinis. When younger, they led a very stylish life and had a house in Sussex where they entertained.

Links was interested in clothes, especially ties, and he was always immaculately dressed. Even though he did not share his wife's enthusiasm for the Indian mystic Krishnamurti, with whom she had grown up and about whom she published several books, when Krishnamurti was dying in California Links accompanied her to his deathbed. He was delighted when he discovered that in his will Krishnamurti had left him his extensive collection of Charvet ties.

Joe Links was extremely wise, versatile and able; he was always polite and worked hard all his life not to make an enemy. "I have had a very private life and I hope to go on being private for what's left of it," he said in 1989.

— Sarah Anderson



Trampler: innate warmth and musicianship

Photograph: Peter Schaefer

Walter Trampler

Walter Trampler, violinist: born Munich 25 August 1915; four times married (one son, and one daughter deceased); died Port Joli, Nova Scotia 28 September 1997.

anti-Fascist) emigrated to the United States in 1939 in sympathy with his Jewish colleagues. Shortly after his arrival he met Serge Koussevitzky, who appointed him to a position as violinist (his first study in Germany) with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

After a brief spell in the US Army, he began to establish himself in New York City as a leading chamber music performer, first with the New Music Quartet, and later as a founder member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Throughout this period he was a frequent guest artist with, among others, the Juilliard Quartet and the Budapest Quartet, with whom he made a number of recordings, including magnificent performances of both the Mozart and Brahms String Quintets.

Throughout his career he was a dedicated teacher, holding appointments at Juilliard, the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Yale, Boston University and the New England Conservatory in Boston. As recently as 1996 he taught at the Mannes College of Music in New York.

I knew Walter Trampler both professionally and as a great friend for more than 25 years. He was a musical inspiration and when in the mid-1970s he commissioned me to write him a concerto, I had one of the finest exponents of contemporary viola music performing my work. He had a great commitment to con-

temporary music, and was willing to take on and master the most complex techniques. One of my earliest memories of his playing was his RCA recording of Luciano Berio's *Cherubs* 2, a fiendishly difficult work (written specially for him) displaying a constant tremolo viola texture. I remember Trampler's jokingly remarking that he had to practise on a vibrating machine to get in training weeks before a performance.

Although we lived many miles apart, we met frequently in New York, where I was always greeted by him and his wife Ruth with more than one very large dry Martini (a Trampler speciality). He was a man of immense style, elegance and culture. This extended well beyond his musical activities, and could be seen in the surroundings of his beautiful Manhattan apartment, and in the renovated colonial church he transformed into a magnificent home in upstate New York.

With his death in his beloved Nova Scotia, the musical world has lost one of the last surviving links of a great European-American performing tradition. Thankfully he made many legendary recordings during his lifetime. For me, perhaps the greatest were the performances of the two late Brahms viola sonatas, which he recorded with Mieczyslaw Horowitz. It was playing of innate warmth and musicianship, a sound that will be with me for ever.

— Simon Bainbridge

Bernard Hooper

Bernard Hooper, engineer and designer: born Birmingham 28 September 1928; married 1958 Pamela Millward (three sons); died Telford, Shropshire 14 September 1997.

Bernard Hooper was one of the most influential designers in the automotive and motorcycle industry, a talent largely unacknowledged because of the industrial confidentiality of his work.

His most lasting work was for Norton motorcycles, in the design and development of the 750 and 830cc Commando road models, which gave the company a period of high success, including winning the *Motor Cycle News* "Machine of the Year" poll from 1968 to 1972. His work with his fellow-designer at Norton Bob Trigg on the ingenious "Isolastic" rubber engine mountings won them the Castrol Design Award in 1970.

The success of the Norton Commando as a machine can be gauged by its continued production today, on a built-to-order basis, by the Norvil

Motorcycle Company of Brownhills, Staffordshire.

Hooper was born in Birmingham and served an apprenticeship with Lucas Engineering there. From secret defence projects at the Ministry of Supply he joined the BSA (Birmingham Small Arms) motorcycle company in 1953, when that Birmingham industrial giant was the biggest maker in the world. His work on the ubiquitous BSA Bantam two-stroke model improved its performance and at the same time gave an insight into the conservatism that prevented new thinking having free rein, in a company that was typical of most in its determination to stay with proven and unexciting machines.

He moved in 1956 into a brief partnership with Hermann Meier and they worked on a development of the old Scott engine, itself still based on the original thinking of Alfred Angus Scott before the First World War. But the revival of the old Yorkshire company, Scott Motorcycles, in Birmingham faded and died before

Hooper and Meier's work could be realised.

In 1958, Hooper joined Villiers Engineering at Wolverhampton as their Chief Designer, and drew up the 250cc single-cylinder Starmaker engine, one of the most under-rated British designs of the post-war period. Intended to give low-cost power for amateur riders in moto-cross, it went on to exceed its designer's brief with success in trials and even the Isle of Man TT races. Peter Inchley, a Villiers development engineer who raced in his spare time, fitted a Starmaker in a Spanish Bullcra chassis and finished third in the 1966 250cc TT, against established opposition from Japan and Italy. The Starmaker went on to be used by smaller British makers in racing machines and won numerous national championships.

Hooper rose to be Chief Designer and Engineer of the famous Norton name when it was absorbed, with Villiers, into the Manganese Bronze combine in 1966. But he was working on more advanced engine concepts than the limited Nor-

ton finance would allow for the Commando, including the rotary Wankel engine that enjoyed a brief spell of production in the late 1980s by the much-reduced Norton company.

Hooper's real enthusiasm was for his own double-diameter piston two-stroke design, the "Wulf", which was never put into production by Norton before they closed their Wolverhampton factory gates in 1977. In a brief but enthusiastic sit-in, the workforce approached Hooper and asked him to head a revived com-



Hooper: engine design

pany financed by their own redundancy and pension funds, but he could see no realistic future for them or their investment.

He moved a few miles from Wolverhampton to a modest research and development office Halfpenny Green, where the list of companies who came to his door included the Royal Aeronautical Establishment, a South East Asian car-maker, Harley-Davidson and Gil Marine of America, the National Research Council of Canada and British Leyland cars. His two-stroke engine is still the subject of negotiation with a number of companies and he worked closely with the Ford Motor Company on their own Orbital two-stroke development.

This recent international standing reflects Hooper's ability as a designer and development engineer but to the end he regretted that his own Wulf two-stroke design was attracting attention from every branch of the automotive industry except the motorcycle one that saw him mature.

— Jim Reynolds

DEATHS

GILL: Suddenly, on 28 September 1997, at home, David Gill, dearly beloved husband of Pauline, father of Maryon and Judith, grandfather of Alexandra, Edward and Aisling, brother of Anne, Requiem Mass at St Dominic's Priory, Southampton Road, London NW8, on Thursday 9 October at 12 noon. Much loved and will be forever missed. Please, no flowers. If desired, donations in his memory to the David Gill Memorial Fund (for Children with Special Needs), c/o A. France & Son Ltd, 45 Lamb's Conduit Street, London WC1N 3NL. His wife's soul rest in eternal peace. AWARE.

JONAS: David Alan, solicitor, aged 66, suddenly, at home, on 1 October. Sadly missed by all his friends and colleagues at Huggmans and all that knew and loved him, both professionally and socially. Cremation at Golden Green Crematorium, Tuesday 7 October, at 2.30pm. No flowers. Donations if desired to the British Legion. Funeral and donation enquiries to W.G. Miller, telephone 0171-226 3886.

LIPSCOMB: Margaret (Peg), née

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

Raven. On 1 October, aged 79, at Canterbury Hospital, widow of John M. Lipscomb, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Funeral at Chilton Church, at 2.15pm on Thursday 9 October. Enquiries to A. Welch & Sons, 01227 787801.

RICHARDS: Janet Elizabeth (née Campbell), peacefully, on 30 September 1997, after a short illness. Widow of Dr A.H. Marduan. Richards. Loving and much-loved mother of Christopher, William and Allison, grandmother and aunt. Funeral private. No flowers, but donations may be sent to the Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Dyar Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire. Memorial gathering in early November.

Fair, St Hesychius and St Thomas Cantelupo of Hereford.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 6.15pm. United Synagogue: 0181-340 8088. Federation of Synagogues: 0181-222 2263. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-589 1663. Reform Synagogue of Great Britain: 0181-349 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2573. New London Synagogue (Masorti): 0171-328 1826.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr S. Mathewson and Miss R. J. Quinnett. The engagement is announced between Scott, daughter of Mr and Mrs Murray Mathewson, of Cambridge, and Becky, daughter of Dr and Mrs Philip Quinnett, of Chichester.

Birthdays

The Earl of Bradford, restaurateur, 50; Sir Stephen Brown, president of the Family Division, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, 73; Mr Chubby Checker, rock singer, 56; Mr John Cranston, artist, 75; Lord Denham, former Lord-in-Waiting to the Queen, 70; Mr Roger Ellis, former Master of Marlborough College, 68; Sir Terence English, cardiologist, surgeon, and Master, St Catherine's College, Cambridge, 65; The Right Rev John Garton, Suffragan Bishop of Plymouth, 36; Sir Roger Horvey, former ambassador to Mexico, 63; Lord Knights, former Chief Constable, West Midlands, 77; Mr William Newton Dunn, former MEP, 56; Sir Shridath Ramphal QC, former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, 69; Mr Steve Michael Reich, composer, 61; Viscount Slim, former colonial officer, 83; Mr John Sullivan, jockey, 46; Mr Gore Vidal, writer, 72.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

Prince Edward attends the celebrations surrounding the marriage of the Prince of Wales and Catherine, Duchess of Cornwall, 11pm.

Changing of the Guard. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment performs the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

LAW REPORT: 3 OCTOBER 1997

Resources irrelevant to duty to accommodate elderly

A local authority was entitled to take account of its limited financial resources in assessing whether an elderly person was in need of care and attention within the terms of section 21 of the National Assistance Act 1948, but, once it had decided that the person was in such need, it was not entitled on financial grounds to refuse to perform the duty imposed upon it by section 21 to make arrangements for suitable accommodation to be available.

Regina v Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, ex parte Help the Aged and others Court of Appeal (Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Roch and Lord Justice Henry) 31 July 1997

The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal against the decision of Mr Justice Jowitt (Law Report, 18 April 1997) that a council was entitled to take ac-

count of its own resources in considering an applicant's need for accommodation under section 21 of the National Assistance Act and in deciding whether it was under a duty to provide such accommodation. *Richard Drabble QC, Helen Mountfield and Andrew Stoddart (Public Law Project) for the appellants; Andrew Gilbart QC and John Barnes (Council Solicitor) for the council.*

Lord Woolf MR said that the case raised three issues: 1) whether a local authority in deciding whether an elderly person was in need of care and attention, in which case it would be required to make arrangements for residential accommodation to be made available, was entitled under section 21 of the National Assistance Act 1948 as amended to have regard to its limited financial resources; 2) whether, if its limited resources were relevant, they justified the policy

which Sefton had adopted; and 3) whether, in determining if "care and attention is not otherwise available to a person" an authority was entitled to take the resources of that person into account even though they fell below the levels prescribed by regulations for the purposes of sections 22 to 26 of the 1948 Act.

The calls on Sefton's resources available to meet needs in relation to accommodation were subject to greater demands than was the case with other councils because it had a large number of elderly and disadvantaged residents. Sefton approached those difficulties by assessing individuals whom it felt might require community care services irrespective of their means or the council's resources. It then sought to arrive at a sensible prioritisation of persons in need against the background of its available resources.

Between the date of the hearing before Jowitt J and the date of his judgment, the House of Lords had decided *R v Gloucestershire County Council and others, ex p Barry* (Law Report 9 April 1997). That decision had clearly influenced the judge. He had not, however, had the benefit of argument as to its relevance to the present case.

The issue in *Barry* was whether a local authority could properly take account of its own financial resources when assessing the needs of a disabled person under 21(1) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. However, Sefton's policy was not to use its financial position to provide a standard against which to assess "need" but to defer consideration and payment (because of its lack of resources) where it accepted that there was a need of care and attention. Having regard to the rea-

soning in *Barry* it must be concluded that there was a limited subjective element in making the assessment whether the ailments of the person concerned did or did not collectively establish a need for care and attention. The first issue would therefore be determined in the affirmative. Having, however, accepted that a person was in need of care and attention, Sefton were not entitled to say that because of their lack of resources they were not prepared to meet the duty placed on them by section 21. The second issue was therefore to be determined adversely to Sefton.

With regard to the third issue, Sefton were not entitled to provide their own scale for judging a person's ability to pay for their own care. Any other approach was incompatible with the language of the relevant statutory provisions. — Kate O'Hanlon, *Barrister*

Bonuses on the line as BT rejects overtures from rival MCI bidder

British Telecom yesterday rejected the offer of talks from WorldCom, which has launched a \$30bn rival takeover bid for MCI, BT's US partner. It also emerged that BT executives will forfeit tens of millions of pounds in bonuses if the UK group's lower takeover bid for MCI fails. *Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, and Michael Harrison report.*



BT's top team (from left): Sir Peter Bonfield, chief executive, Sir Iain Vallance, chairman, and Bill Cockburn, managing director

BT was last night refusing to admit defeat after it found its £13bn bid for MCI outmanoeuvred by WorldCom just weeks before the merger was to be completed. Senior executives at BT were said to be waiting for the outcome of an MCI board meeting, likely to take place as early as today.

Industry analysts raised the prospect that BT might accept the offer of three-way discussions from Bernard Ebbers, WorldCom's chairman. But a BT spokesman emphatically ruled out the move. "This is a matter for MCI. Until WorldCom and MCI have spoken there isn't much we can do about it."

BT highlighted the difference between its bid, which includes \$4bn in cash, and

WorldCom's \$41.50 a share all paper offer. "We have a deal on the table which is signed, sealed and will soon be delivered. It is in shares and cash. WorldCom are offering paper," said the spokesman.

WorldCom again raised the prospect of discussions with BT if the rival merger plan went through. It would leave BT with a 10 per cent stake in MCI-WorldCom. Colin Williams, president of international operations, said: "They're welcome to remain a shareholder and they're welcome to see how we'd jointly address the world environment. The door is open. Whether BT walks through it is another question."

Sir Peter Bonfield, BT chief executive, and his new managing director Bill Cockburn, were in Brighton last night meeting

the Prime Minister Tony Blair. BT said Sir Peter would then be starting a pre-planned holiday abroad. "He's due a holiday and he'll be taking it. He deserves it."

BT shares rose a further 17.5p to 459.5p, as speculators who had piled into MCI shares in the US switched into BT stock.

The European Commission meanwhile said WorldCom's \$30bn offer would be investigated under its merger rules. "It's not been notified to us yet but at first glimpse it ought to be investigated. That seems obvious," said a spokesman for Karel van Miert, the competition commissioner.

Mr Williams said WorldCom's sales in Europe would be \$600m this year, but added that MCI had no European business at all. "In merger terms this deal adds nothing at all to our European business," he said.

It emerged that if the merger with MCI fails to take place, then a group of senior BT executives, led by Sir Peter, stand to lose out on incentive packages worth tens of millions of pounds.

Sir Peter is due a £500,000 one-off bonus if the deal is completed and will also be the biggest beneficiary from a series of share bonus schemes that the merged company, Concert, would put in place. The various schemes could be worth as much as £3m to Sir Peter, who would become chief executive of the combined business.

About 200 BT executives will participate in the Concert global equity incentive portfolio, as it is known. Of these, about 60 will be eligible for a scheme under which they can receive up to two times their salary in shares provided Concert meets certain performance targets judged against other international telecoms companies.

All 200 would be eligible for a deferred bonus plan under which Concert will top up annual bonuses by a third provided they are taken in shares, not cash.

Additionally, Sir Peter would participate in a scheme entitling him to share options worth four times salary.

BT sources yesterday disputed WorldCom's claim that MCI would not have to pay a \$450m penalty if its shareholders rejected the merger with BT. "No matter which way they play it, they will have to pay \$450m plus expenses."

Bid would allow Salomon to recoup some of \$100m loss

The role of Salomon Brothers in WorldCom's \$30bn bid for MCI was under intense scrutiny last night, as it emerged that the deal would enable the US investment banking giant to recoup some of the \$100m it lost when BT cut the price of its original merger offer.

Salomon was the leading adviser backing WorldCom's bid, a service which is likely to earn the bank \$100m in fees.

In a close relationship going back to the 1980s, Salomon has also repeatedly tipped the fast-growing company as one of the

brightest businesses in the industry.

When Bernard Ebbers, now WorldCom president, embarked on its dramatic expansion into the US phone market, Salomon provided the guidance. The bank was also the adviser to MFS, the local telephone group, and was instrumental in bringing the company together with WorldCom in last year's \$14bn merger.

WorldCom's biggest gamble, the takeover bid for MCI, would also solve some of Salomon's problems.

The bank is believed to have built up a \$500m arbitrage gamble on MCI's share price, which plunged when BT renegotiated the deal in August. The bank was one of several arbitrageurs, including the billionaire speculator George Soros, which bet on the fact that MCI shares were trading well below the price implied in BT's cash and shares offer. When WorldCom's bid burst into the open on Wednesday, MCI's share price leapt by 20 per cent, taking much of the pressure off the speculators.

It was unclear yesterday whether Salomon had unwound its entire position before WorldCom's bid. Tom King, Salomon's managing director, who helped to arrange the offer, declined to comment. "We don't disclose this and we're not required to," he said last night.

One City trader said: "It's unlikely they would have totally unwound the whole position. If they'd stuck with MCI shares then Salomon's would probably have made back most of what they'd lost."

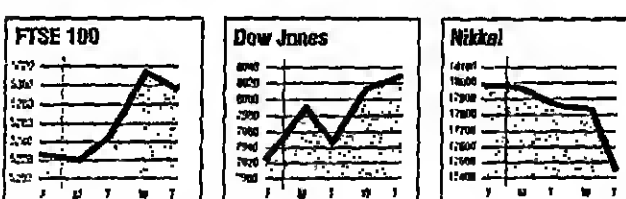
Salomon also came under scrutiny following the shock profits warning issued by MCI in July.

Jack Grubman, Salomon's New York based telecoms analyst, urged that the two companies keep the deal together, despite the turbulence.

He told investors in a note after the profits warning that there was "no deal risk whatsoever."

Mr Grubman and Mr Ebbers have also had a close working relationship for many years. —Chris Godsmark

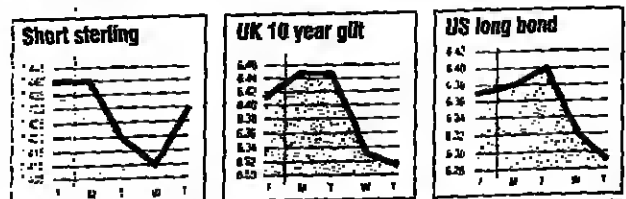
STOCK MARKETS



*Dow Jones index and graph at 5pm

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5296.10	-21.00	-0.40	5317.10	3900.40	3.32
FTSE 250	4861.30	21.90	0.45	4839.40	4348.10	3.32
FTSE 350	2536.60	-6.00	-0.24	2545.80	1949.20	3.32
FTSE All Share	2477.29	-5.10	-0.21	2482.39	1923.79	3.31
FTSE SmallCap	2349.7	6.20	0.27	2422.20	2128.40	3.15
FTSE MidCap	1297.0	3.80	0.29	1346.50	1188.70	3.29
FTSE AIM	1006.8	0.00	0.00	1138.00	1002.10	0.97
Dow Jones	8032.19	15.96	0.20	8250.31	5921.87	1.66
Nikkei	17455.04	-387.12	-2.21	17612.30	17303.65	0.90
Hong Kong	15049.30	184.93	1.24	16673.27	11905.51	2.75
S&P 500	4273.71	76.73	1.83	4436.93	2659.25	1.87

INTEREST RATES

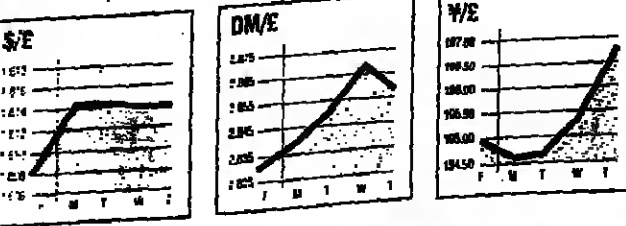


Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr	5 yr	10 yr	15 yr	20 yr	30 yr
UK	7.51	7.58	7.58	7.58	7.58	7.58	7.58
US	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75
Japan	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53
Germany	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls	Unchanged
BT Energy 254.50 21.50 6.48	Bloomin' 585.00 42.50 6.77	
Sainsbury 1054.00 46.50 4.62	United Assur 491.50 22.00 4.52	
WH Smith 381.50 16.00 4.38	Rolls Royce 243.00 10.50 4.34	
BT Telecom 459.50 17.50 3.96	BT Retail 149.50 3.50 2.35	

CURRENCIES



Pound	5pm	Change	Yr Ago	Dollar	5pm	Change	Yr Ago
£/\$	1.6143	+0.0020	1.5855	£/DM	0.6195	-0.010	0.6388
£/¥	2.8906	-0.240	2.3986	£/¥	1.7736	-0.200	1.5328
¥/\$	196.74	+¥1.70	175.14	¥/\$	121.88	+¥1.04	111.83
£/Index	100.80	+0.20	87.30	£/Index	105.30	+0.20	97.60

OTHER INDICATORS

23 Sep	20 Sep	17 Sep	14 Sep	11 Sep	8 Sep	5 Sep	2 Sep
US GDP	19.76	0.04	22.55	GDP	112.80	3.50	109.00
US Unemp	332.85	-1.00	380.80	Unemp	158.50	3.5	153.14
US Inflation	5.20	0.01	4.91	Inflation	7.00	5.75	

Speculation grows over BZW takeover by continental bank

The consolidation of the investment banking sector looked set to claim another scalp last night as speculation intensified that a continental European bank was finalising a takeover of BZW. Tom Stevenson and Leo Paterson report on an apparent volte face by its parent, Barclays.

The future of BZW was thrown into doubt yesterday by increasingly strong market rumours that its parent Barclays was discussing a disposal of its investment banking arm to a major continental bank. Staff remained in the dark last night but an announcement is expected today.

Barclays shares closed at 1747p, down from the day's high of 1800p, but more than 20 per cent higher than they traded at only a month ago. Despite the at times hectic trading, Barclays said yesterday that it was not commenting on market speculation. ING, one of the continental European banks rumoured to have BZW in its sights, also refused to comment.

The future of BZW has been the source of City gossip for months following a period in which both Barclays and NatWest banks have been

held back by the performance of their investment banking arms. But speculation has intensified in recent weeks and Barclays shares have soared on hopes that it might shed its comparatively volatile investment banking earnings to focus on its core retail operation.

A disposal of BZW would, however, represent a change of heart for Barclays which had resisted calls from its shareholders to pull out of investment banking and publicly backed the firm.

BZW was thrown into the spotlight in February, when an £85m drop in operating profit wiped more than £1bn from the value of Barclays' shares. Potential bidders back then were thought to include JP Morgan and Salomon Brothers.

In June, the increasingly feverish gossip saw prey turn predator, when Barclays was named as a possible bidder for rival NatWest. Barclays' shares soared and NatWest, struggling with its investment banking division NatWest Markets, asked the Takeover Panel to force Barclays to make its intentions known. The Takeover Panel refused.

Barclays/NatWest speculation died down in July after it was revealed that NatWest and insurance group Prudential had held merger talks. Rumours surrounding the future of BZW abated in the summer as it started to succeed in a bid to distance itself from the problems at NatWest.

BZW announced much improved first half results, despite revealing a £20m "black hole" in its trading op-

erations. Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays, said at the time that BZW was "recovering nicely".

Last week, however, the pressure on Barclays was reignited by the unexpected announcement by Travelers Group, owners of retail stockbrokers Smith Barney, that it planned to take over US investment bank Salomon Brothers. Hot on the heels of a similar deal between retail stockbrokers Dean Witter and US investment bank Morgan Stanley, it suggested the consolidation of the sector was gaining an unstoppable momentum and speculation was whipped into a frenzy.

The Travelers/Salomon deal put pressure on European banks to follow suit or risk being squeezed out by the growing power of the so-called hedge bracket of big American firms like Merrill Lynch and Goldman Sachs. Europeans such as Deutsche Bank, ABN Amro and ING were named as potential bidders for American firms such as Lehman Brothers and Bankers Trust but also for relative minnows, in global terms, such as BZW.

A takeover of BZW would come just as the investment bank appeared to have regained its self-confidence. It recently completed a move from shabby offices in the City to brand new marble clad accommodation in the Canary Wharf development in London's Docklands.

It also seemed to have reversed a dramatic outflow of staff that had seen a constant flow of analysts to other firms.

based on total shareholder return. The company's performance must rank 50th or above against the FTSE 100 for any shares to be released. If the performance is in the top quartile then 100 per cent of the shares are vested.

Centrica's shares have been on a rising trend since the demerger in February as it has begun to unwind its take-or-pay liabilities in the North Sea and fought back against loss of market share to rivals through a series of price cutting initiatives.

—Michael Harrison

Shares windfall for Centrica directors

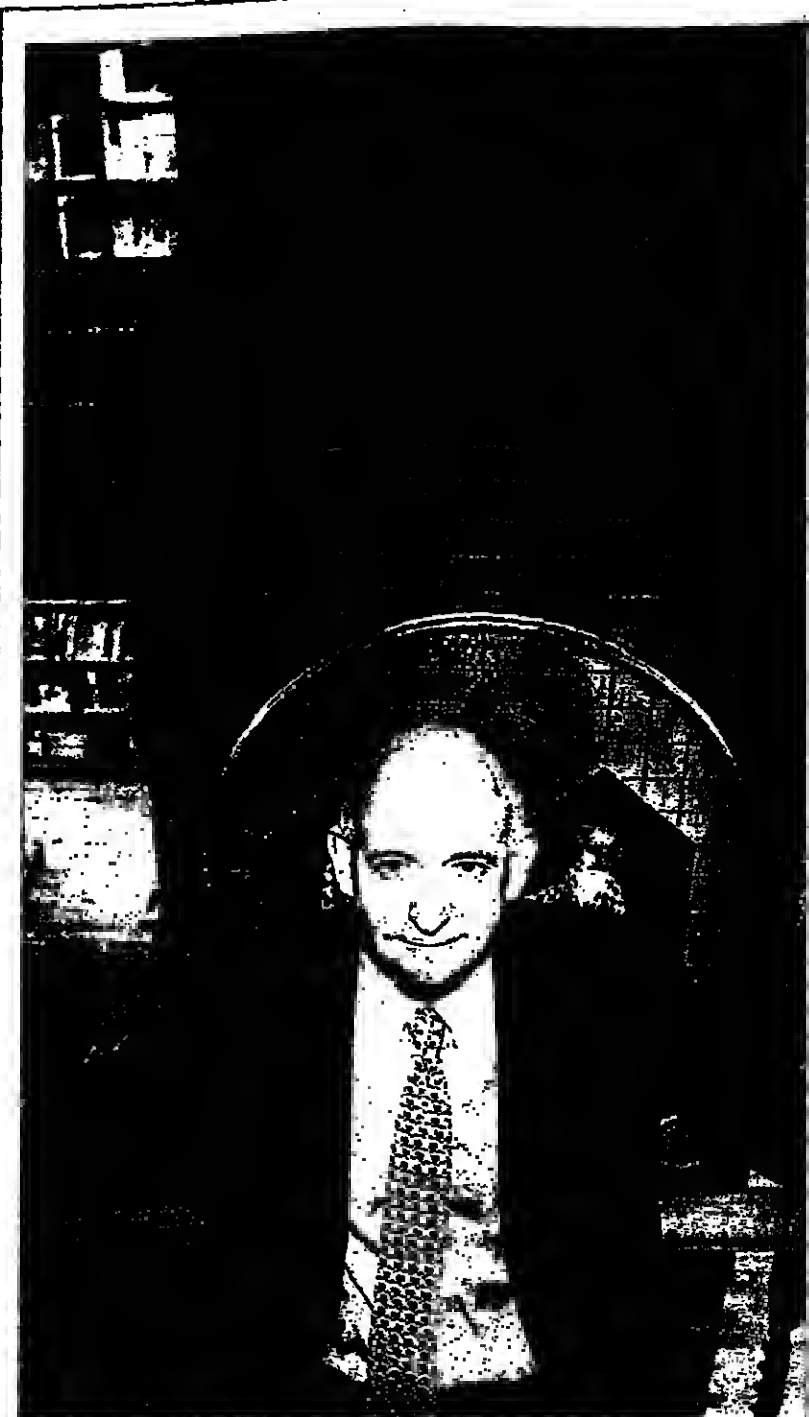
Roy Gardner, chief executive of the British Gas trading arm Centrica, was last night sitting on shares worth more than £2.5m after the company issued a further tranche of options under its long-term incentive scheme.

A total of five executive directors, including Mr Gardner, were awarded another 1.18 million shares worth £1.1m. In total the five hold 6 million shares worth £5.7m at last night's closing price of 94.5p.

Mr Gardner has 2.7 million shares, of which 1.23 million are held

under the long-term incentive scheme. Mike Alexander, managing director, has just over one million, finance director Mark Clare holds 774,000, commercial director Peter Lehmann has 967,000 and Roger Wood, managing director of British Gas Services, holds 625,000 shares.

Under the Centrica scheme, directors are eligible for share awards equal to 125 per cent of their base salaries. The shares have to be held for a period of five to six years and can only be granted provided certain performance conditions are met



Tim Waterstone: If his takeover proposals were reconsidered he would instigate a 'root and branch shake-up' at the troubled retailer

How I would breathe life into WH Smith

Tim Waterstone's ambitious bid to take over WH Smith remained on the table yesterday as the bookseller outlined his plans for transforming the embattled high street chain. Tom Stevenson shared his vision.

quire beefing up the book section, enlarging the news offering to become the "authoritative newsagent again" and taking the stationery range up-market. Smith, with more than 500 shops, has been losing market share to supermarkets, which sell many similar lines.

Mr Waterstone's proposals, which envisaged a 200p a share cash payment to WH Smith shareholders, together with a share in a heavily borrowed acquisition vehicle, were still being treated with scepticism in the City yesterday. Analysts and WH Smith's large shareholders said they were waiting for concrete proposals to be tabled.

Despite Mr Waterstone's claim yesterday that WH Smith chairman Jeremy Hardy had been interested in his proposals as late as Tuesday afternoon, it was not felt that the company had acted hastily in dismissing the plan without putting it to shareholders.

One leading shareholder, who wanted to remain anonymous, said: "There is often a lot of sound and not much light in these situations. If there is something credible we would like to explore it, but we have a slight feeling that this is the 1980s all over again."

He added that, while new chief executive Richard Handover had a lot to prove, he should retain shareholders' support.

John Richards, an analyst at NatWest Markets, was equally sceptical: "We don't regard it as a serious offer and taking on that level of debt is potentially problematical for a company with strategic issues to resolve."

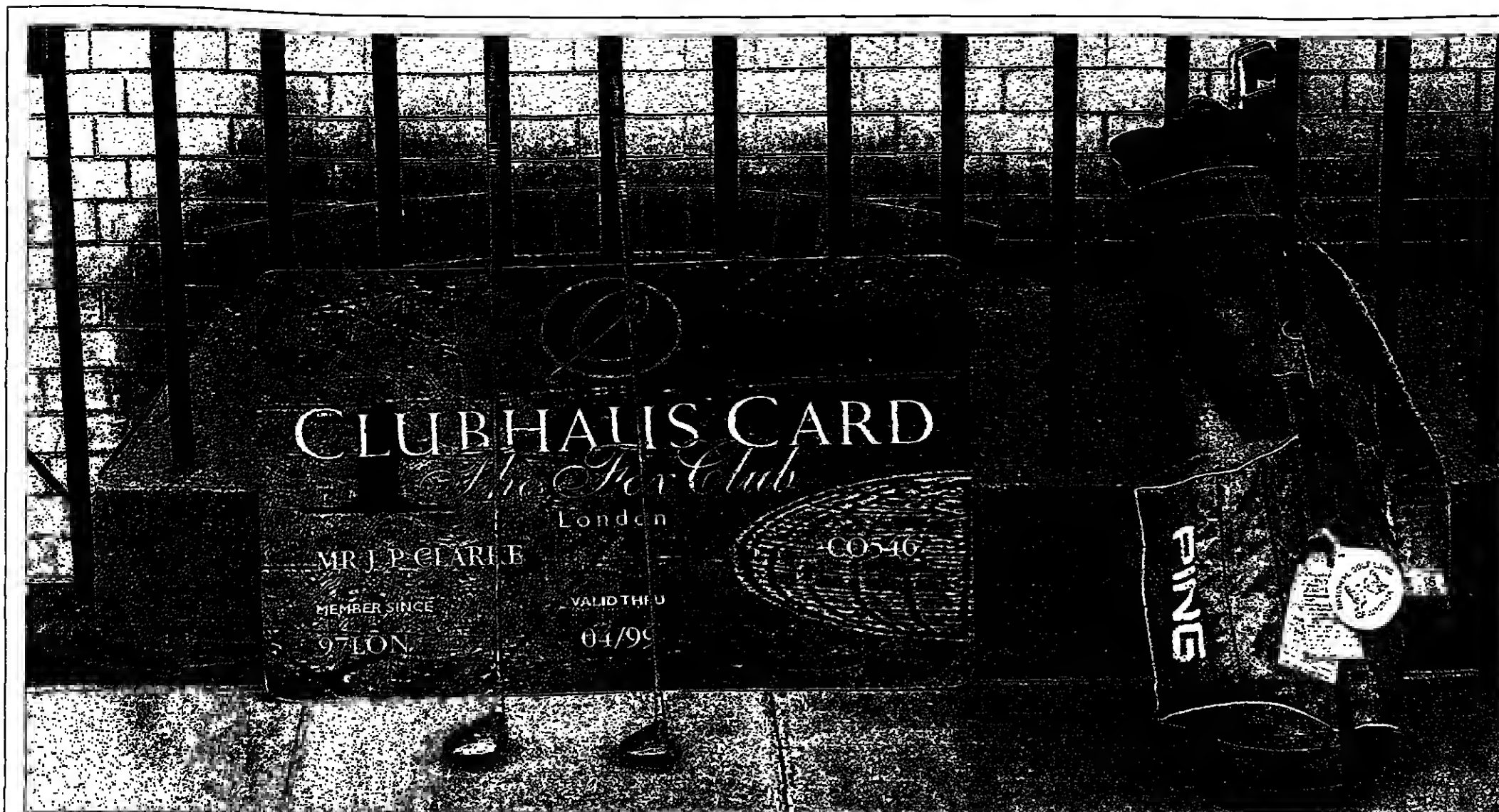
He questioned whether Mr Waterstone had the experience or ability to run a public company of WH Smith's size.

The Waterstone team also hit back at the assumptions made by WH Smith in its rejection on Wednesday. It denied putting a valuation of £35m on Mr Waterstone's latest retail venture, the Daisy and Tom children's store on London's King's Road.

That figure, it said, was inferred by WH Smith from its proposal and, if true, implied a valuation of £1.6bn for the group, a substantial premium to its current market value. It also questioned WH Smith's calculation of advisers' fees of £34m.

SHARE PRICES

The Independent recently changed the basis under which stocks are selected for inclusion on the shares listing page. The first wave of readers' requests for the inclusion of certain other stocks is about to be accommodated. All further requests should be put in writing to the Business Editor, marked "share listings" (or e-mailed to: IndyBusiness@Independent.co.uk) and will be accommodated if possible.



Clubhaus doubles first-half profits after buying spree

Clubhaus, the UK golf company, announced yesterday that first-half profits had doubled to £1.4m in the six months to June thanks to an acquisition spree which has seen it buy seven golf courses since the start of the year. Clubhaus is buying a third German course in Stuttgart, taking its total number of European clubs to 15. It plans to expand its chain to 20 clubs in the near future. Clubhaus also said that there are almost 6,500 holders of the Clubhaus Card (left), its new loyalty card that gives course discounts. Clubhaus' shares rose 1.5p to 81.5p, compared to its flotation price of 75p in February 1996. Clubhaus' shares got off to a rocky start when they floated but have done better recently. The recovery has been helped by the recruitment in late 1996 of David Lloyd, the former tennis star who set up a fitness club chain, as non-executive director. The addition of Mr Lloyd to the board was part of the company's aim to combine golf courses with other leisure activities. Five Clubhaus UK courses now have planning permission for health and fitness facilities.

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Sheffield United and QPR show heavy losses in post-flotation results

Two quoted First Division football clubs, Sheffield United and Queens Park Rangers, yesterday reported large losses roughly equivalent to their annual income in their first results since they joined the stock market. Both blamed heavy spending in the transfer market for adding to their trading difficulties. Clifford German investigates the high costs of competing to reach the Premier League and join football's top flight.

Sheffield United the First Division football side that reversed into Conard, the Manchester-based sports consultancy last January reported a 33 per cent jump in attendances and trebled sales of merchandise through the club shop in the new season, chief executive Charles Green said yesterday.

A plan to build a hotel and leisure park on a 14-acre site and expand the ground capacity at Bramall Lane has been approved, licences have been granted to open bars in the stadium concourses and the shirt-sponsorship deal with Vaux breweries comes up for renewal at the end of the season.

The club is now third in the table with games in hand. But the company that owns the club made a pre-tax loss of £5.88m for the combined businesses in the year to the end of June compared with a loss of just £59,000 the previous year, due to spiralling wages costs. Alan Kelly, the goalkeeper, and the Norwegian international Roger Nilsen, two players currently out of favour with the new team manager may have to be sold soon to raise the best part of £3m.

Turnover reached £8.9m of which £2.35m came from the football club, but costs swallowed up all but £13,000. After adding in a £2.44m loss on the sale of Sportswinner clothing businesses, and a loss

of £2.96m in the transfer market the company fell sharply into the red. The football turnover could treble this year and the sports promotion business of Conard will be retained, Mr Green confirmed, but the shares fell 4p to 53.5p, barely half the price they reached just after the merger in January.

It was a similar story at Loftus Road, the holding company that owns Queen's Park Rangers football club and Wasp, the Rugby Union league champions. Promotion for QPR, currently third in the table, will transform the financial prospects for the group and attendances are up 6 per cent so far this season, while the club is reviewing the options for enlarging the Loftus Road stadium or moving to a new site to the west of London, the chairman, Chris Wright, said yesterday.

Loftus Road also intends to invest in and develop its off-the-field activities in the area of merchandising and other commercial activities in order to broaden the commercial base and lessen the dependence on success on the field, the chairman said.

The company has appointed a new chief executive, Stephen Oakley, a former finance director of Hartstone to run the club, but it kicked-off its first published accounts with a loss almost equal to the annual turnover. The clubs generated an income of £7.5m, playing staff and match day costs absorbed £7.47m and the stadium cost £920,000 to run. Together they added up to an operating loss of £3.61m and a net loss of £3.55m on player transfers resulted in a total loss of £7.16m. After crediting interest income of £112,000, the published loss reached £7.05m, equal to 20.1p a share.

Loftus Road shares eased 1p to 44p compared with the high point of 106.5p at the peak of the season of soccer mania in January. Other quoted clubs have also fallen over the year. Spurs were unchanged at 92.5p yesterday, 40 per cent below their high in February. Even Manchester United, near the top of the Premier League fell 2p on the news that their captain, Roy Keane, is out for the season to 66p, 8 per cent below the peak.

UK's late-payers total 80%

More than 80 per cent of British companies pay their bills late, and the worst offenders are large organisations, according to research published by business information service Dun and Bradstreet to coincide with today's deadline for submissions on the Government's consultative paper proposing that penalties and statutory interest be introduced for those who do not settle bills on time. Accountants remain sceptical about the effectiveness of such a move, however, with the Institute of Chartered Accountants recommending its introduction in stages to allow assessment, while the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants argues that the measure will only work if part of a larger action plan designed to change the "late-payment culture".

C&W launches price war

Cable & Wireless launched a new price war with BT yesterday when it said it is to cap the price of a UK national telephone call at 50 pence on Saturdays from October until the end of the year. Over one million consumer phone users will pay no more than 50 pence for a UK long-distance call every Saturday, allowing them to stay on phone all day at no extra cost, the company said. "We have introduced the 50 pence price cap so that customers can enjoy using the phone and not worry about how long the call is," said Adrian Chamberlain, managing director of C&W Communications. "Saturday seemed an ideal day to choose as people have more time to relax and make those catch-up phone calls," he added.

Huntingdon gets clearance

Huntingdon, the drug testing group, said yesterday that the Home Office has granted a new Certificate of Designation for Huntingdon's research centres at Juntindon and Eye. Since its interim statement on 31 July this year the company says it has "explained to the Home Office remedial actions taken and enhancements to managerial and supervisory controls and training programmes. In response to the 16 stringent pre-conditions to the award of a new certificate. Ministers have agreed that Huntingdon has met these pre-conditions. The new Certificate means that there will be no disruption to any current or planned studies and other research activities, the company said. Glaxo Wellcome said yesterday that it had not yet decided whether to renew business with Huntingdon.

Burn Stewart figures updated

Burn Stewart, the independent whisky distillers, reported a 29 per cent rise in sales to £70m, a 56 per cent increase in operating profits to £6.1m and a leap in pre-tax profits from £1.01m to £3.56m in the year to the end of June. But the results are clouded by the disputed figures for the previous year. They included £5.1m worth of turnover and £1.4m worth of profit that has now been transferred to 1996-97 figures after the directors accepted a ruling by a review panel. Profits continue to be affected by the high costs of brand building in the face of depressed prices. But whisky prices in the retailers' own label sector where Burn Stewart operates have begun to rise, chairman Bill Thornton said. The shares fell 2.5p to 44p.

Boost for housing sector

House-builders are taking heart from the rising house prices and stepping up their activity. In the three months from June to August, 48,000 dwellings were started, an increase of 8 per cent on the same three months a year ago, while in the month of August 14,900 dwellings were started, an increase of 22 per cent on August last year, and 13,000 were completed, 25 per cent more than a year ago.

House prices are now rising by anything from 6.9 per cent a year according to the Halifax up to 12.9 per cent a year according to Nationwide. New house prices are also beginning to rise. Calliford the Lincolnshire based housebuilders and specialised construction company said yesterday it has raised prices by 5 per cent in three stages in the year to the end of June and another 1.5 per cent in July, and expects similar increases over the next year.

Profit doubled to £2.24m in the year to the end of June in spite of a £660,000 hit on the last of its discontinued businesses, house completions were up 15 per cent and housebuilding profits rose 38 per cent to £1.77m. It almost achieved its target of a 10 per cent profit on turnover in the housebuilding division, the chairman, Richard Miles, said yesterday.

The group expects to spend £500,000 on improving its IT investment in the current year in an attempt to win more construction and maintenance contracts. It has also invested £200,000 in a 25 per cent stake in the proposed Rapid Transit System for Northampton. It hopes to install a network of low-pollution gas-driven buses running in specially built concrete channels and served by park-and-ride terminals on the town's outskirts.

IN BRIEF

United States industry lifted by orders surge

US industry enjoyed a 1.3 per cent jump in orders in August, thanks in large part to the biggest monthly rise in orders for electronic components since February 1990. These surged by 76.9 per cent, while orders for electrical equipment climbed by a healthy 28.4 per cent. Figures for July were revised up to show a 0.5 per cent increase during the month. However, the recent run of figures showing the American economy to be growing more steadily than expected were countered by a small increase in new unemployment claims. These edged up by 1,000 to 308,000, although the four-week average fell from 313,000 to 308,750 in the latest week. The eyes of the financial markets remained firmly set on figures due today on employment gains and earnings last month.

German output falls

Germany's industrial output fell in August, unable to keep up the pace after surging in July. That month's 3.9 per cent jump was almost offset by a 3.2 per cent drop in August. The weakest part of manufacturing was the production of consumer durables, reflecting the absence of consumer demand and the reliance of the German recovery on exports. Construction also fell sharply, in both west and east Germany. However, economists said the new figures were only slightly disappointing and the underlying trend remained healthy. Fears that the Bundesbank might still increase interest rates have not abated.

International Energy boost

International Energy made a half-year pre-tax profit of £5.17m against £3.84m last time and announced a placing and one-for-four open offer to raise £12.38m. The company grew its earnings per share to 7.68p from 5.61p and its dividend to 1.20p from 1.16p. The company said it will spend the £12m on developing its UK natural gas business. Credit Lyonnais Laing, as agent for the company, has conditionally agreed to place 50 per cent of the new ordinary shares with institutional and other investors subject to the rights of qualifying shareholders to apply for new ordinary shares under the open offer. The company said trading for the current year is in line with the board's expectations.

Bowland gets regulator fine

Bowland Financial Management, an independent financial adviser based in Nelson, Lancashire, has been fined £10,000 by regulators for breaking rules on controlling its own business. The Personal Investment Authority said the company had failed to make sure its staff were suitable for the job and were properly trained and supervised. Records were badly kept and the company had neglected to take the right steps to make sure it did not break the rules. Bowland had also broken rules on the financial resources it needed and the reports it should make to the regulator. The findings were exposed in a routine monitoring visit by the authority. Bowland had at first decided it would appeal against being disciplined but later backed down.

Unilever sells coffee interest

Unilever is to sell its coffee operations in Australia and New Zealand, together worth Aus\$90million, as a single unit to concentrate on its ice cream and tea operations, a spokesman said. The operations, which are profitable, were acquired as part of the Bushells acquisition made nearly 10 years ago, and they employ 231 people in Australia and 43 in New Zealand. The brands being sold include Robert Timms, Pablo and Faggs and will be sold as a going concern.

Queensborough profits slip

Queensborough made pre-tax profits of £809,000 against £848,000 last time, and paid a dividend of 0.1p against nothing the year before. In August, the caravan park division and Hotel Bursin traded in line with expectations, however the day-visitor attractions recorded a reduction against last year, according to Queensborough chairman KR Leech. "Currently every effort is being made to maximise performance in the second half year," he said. Mr Leech said significant progress is being made in the formation of the new chain of branded restaurants division and the plans will be announced separately "as soon as we are in a position to do so".

United Assurance raises mis-selling provision to £150m

United Assurance, the life assurance group formed last year from the merger of Refuge Assurance and United Friendly, yesterday more than doubled the amount it is setting aside to pay compensation to investors who were mis-sold personal pensions to £150m. Andrew Verity reports on the embarrassing admission.

United Assurance warned that it may not be able to meet strict deadlines set by the Treasury for compensation victims of the pension mis-selling scandal. Directors blamed delays on difficulties obtaining information from both occupational schemes and its own clients.

Group chief executive George Mack denied that the company had failed properly to estimate its own liability in the past.

He said the extra money was needed to meet liabilities in full in the wake of a tougher attitude

on mis-selling from the Treasury. Budget changes to tax credits have also increased the cost of compensation.

Mr Mack also claimed that the cost of redress had risen because United is to offer mis-selling victims guarantees of redress in future - a more expensive method than compensation upfront.

However, the doubt cast on United's ability to meet the Treasury deadlines could damage future earnings. Government ministers have hinted that companies which do not meet the deadlines could be excluded from selling stakeholder pensions.

Stakeholder pensions, expected to be introduced in the next two years, will target low income savers - a key market for United, a home service company whose sales people collect premiums door to door.

Home service companies are particularly exposed to the mis-selling scandal. Prudential, which was once the largest player in this market before it quit the business, revealed a £450m provision for mis-selling two months ago. It had previously set aside just £250m.

In contrast to a Prudential decision to make

policyholders pay 90 per cent of the compensation costs with shareholders paying only 10 per cent, United's shareholders will bear 80 per cent of the costs.

The announcement came as United struggled to appease shareholders, who have been frustrated by delays in getting DTI approval to restructure the group. It announced it had finally got approval for shareholders to reap most of the £37m cost savings flowing from last October's merger.

The directors have also bowed to pressure from the market to ditch a loss-making direct-selling vehicle, United Friendly Financial Planning. This was sold to Friends Provident for a loss of £2m. One analyst said this was a misguided venture up-market which should have been ditched long ago. "It has taken them a very long time to do what is obvious," he said.

Mr Mack said the company had struggled to find qualified staff. "It is easy to look with twenty-twenty hindsight, which is all right in itself. But coming up against practical difficulties is quite different."

Mr Mack admits morale is low among Unit-

ed's staff as more than a third must leave or be made redundant. Of 6,400 staff, 900 have left after turning down the option of relocating from London to Wiltshire, the company's new headquarters in Cheshire.

But the company is currently selecting more staff for compulsory redundancy to bring numbers down to 4,200. Of 279 branches, 160 are to be shut.

United's operating profits nearly doubled to £158m in the six months to June, excluding the provision for mis-selling. However, £67.8m of this came from the investment return on more than £800m of surplus assets. In the same period last year, United was blocked from attributing these surplus assets to shareholders.

The figure for operating profits also masks a 5 per cent drop in new premiums from January to June against the same six months last year. This contrasts sharply with close competitors such as Britannia Assurance, which has boosted sales after competitors such as Prudential withdrew from the market.

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OUTLOOK ON BT'S CRISIS, ADVANCE CORPORATION TAX AND PROSPECTS FOR EMU

Huge amounts of time, energy and emotion have been invested by the BT board on bringing about the MCI merger. It is hard to exaggerate how serious a setback the WorldCom counter bid has been - the type of thing executives find it difficult to bounce back from. If Sir Iain Vallance and his chief executive at BT, Sir Peter Bonfield, have got a plan B for realising their global ambitions, there is no indication of what it might be; the stunned silence emanating from BT's Newgate Street headquarters over the past two days rather suggests that they don't. Everything seems to have rested on MCI. Without it, BT may have to reconcile itself to its present role as just another low-level national telecoms utility.

Hope springs eternal, however, and for the time being the strategy seems to be to turn a blind eye to reality and insist that there is still some chance of pulling off the MCI deal. This line of reasoning rests largely on the assumption that MCI shareholders will think a bird in the hand worth two in the bush. BT's cash and shares bid is there on the table having finally cleared all regulatory obstacles. By contrast, WorldCom's all paper offer is at least six months off and more likely a lot longer.

Moreover, as our story on page 23 explains, WorldCom is a creature of Salomon Brothers, the Wall Street investment bank, and largely its creation. With its hectic series of acquisitions, WorldCom has become a finely tuned tax earning machine for Salomon's, so much so that it is reasonable to suspect that this is actually its purpose. Add to that the huge arbitrage

position Salomon Brothers was running on the BT/MCI transaction, on which it stood to make a substantial loss, and the real substance and purpose of this offer in highly rated WorldCom shares begins to look very questionable.

Trouble is, that though these arguments might look a runner from this side of the Atlantic, they are so much junk mail in the highly charged, ethylene driven, never weary world inhabited by Wall Street investors these days. On Wall Street the choice is between one of the US's greatest ever growth stocks, and a hog standard, low growth European utility. From the subter and considered environment of the City of London (no joke intended), it is as plain as a pike staff that WorldCom's bid for MCI is a classic and foolish top of the bull market transaction. Unfortunately, for BT this is as unobvious to US investors as the great speculative bubble of Wall Street itself. In the absence of a market crash, a plan B is rapidly going to have to be wheeled out of whatever deep vault it has been hiding in.

Time up for an antiquated tax

There was no guidance from the Treasury yesterday on the suggestion that Gordon Brown is about to scrap Advance Corporation Tax. It would be pretty odd if he were not, however. Crucially, scrapping ACT will level the playing field between UK companies and foreign companies

with businesses based here. The Government's plan to prevent UK companies paying foreign income dividends from 1999 but allow foreign companies to continue is a ludicrous anomaly.

FIDs are the only way UK companies can avoid paying tax twice on dividends paid out of overseas earnings. No where else in the world do companies have to worry about where they get their profits from to pay their dividends. Without FIDs, UK companies like BAT, Rio Tinto and Glaxo Wellcome which make most of their money outside the UK would face a soaring ACT bill which they cannot offset against mainstream tax.

As things stand, UK companies face an uncomfortable choice from 1999 onwards; either curb their foreign expansion or pay the penalty. That rather flies in the face of Labour's desire to boost Britain's interests abroad. Abolishing ACT would allow British companies to invest overseas on rational financial criteria without the fear of keeping enough business in the UK to satisfy the tax system. It would also make the UK market more transparent and attractive to foreign companies.

The problem is that scrapping ACT has other attractions that Labour will be less inclined to encourage. Water companies with large capital investment programmes will do very nicely out of the abolition of ACT, thank you very much. Lossmakers will also benefit. Losses mean no mainstream tax bill, so there is nothing to offset ACT against. Scrapping ACT will also undoubtedly result in more share buybacks. Companies like Reuters, which want to pay

out capital, incur ACT if they initiate a normal buy back. Corporate financiers are feverishly attempting to find ways around the problem, but nothing has yet adequately replaced the ACT liable share buy back.

Regardless of these politically less palatable side effects, however, it would be madness for the Government to persist with this antiquated form of taxation. The sooner it is replaced with a phased system of corporation tax payments, the better.

Brussels surveys hazy EMU future

The European Commission's report yesterday urging EMU aspirants to get a move on with the practical preparations for the single currency carried echoes of Nero fiddling while Rome burned. For over in Rome Romano Prodi's 17-month old government was starting crisis in the face. Its 1998 budget faces defeat over planned welfare spending cuts that are essential if Italy is to move or less meet the Maastricht criteria; and the government, long-lived by Italian standards, might have to call an election.

True, this is a bit unfair to the Commission. For there can be almost no mission. For those not joining in the first wave - which almost certainly includes Britain - despite the Government's efforts to pose as cuddly Europeans without actually changing the policy yet - a lot of practicalities still have to be addressed. British

businesses, especially in financial services, will have to adjust to trading in euros anyway, and will have to update their accounting and computer systems at the same time as reprogramming them to cope with the year 2000 problem.

However, the future outline of the single currency is still hazy. Just over a year from the start date it is not at all clear when or whether two of the four biggest economies in the EU will join. Although many in the City now assume Labour will find it hard to stay out after 2002 there must be, as a big new study by ABN Amro points out, a political debate ahead. Even Euro-enthusiasts can be forgiven for thinking it is a reckless approach to such an important project to leave the debate until the last minute.

The implication of the uncertainties is more sharp moves in the financial markets. During the past week gilt yields have closed on bond yields as the markets responded to hints and whispers that the Labour Government was minded to join the single currency soon after the first wave. And Italian bonds and the lira have fallen in reaction to the fiscal and political turmoil. Both moves were predictable - and some analysts have indeed been predicting them for a few weeks. Gilt were undervalued, Italian bonds overvalued.

However, these moves could be reversed as long as the political decisions are put off. If Labour senses a swing in the public mood against EMU and drops a few uncuddly hints, it could lose the bonus it gained in the financial markets this past week.

Steve Jobs stands by Apple decision to ditch cloners

Steve Jobs, the interim chief executive officer at Apple Computer, yesterday staunchly defended his controversial decision to break relations with clone makers of the Macintosh line saying that, had they been allowed to endure, the licensing agreements would have sent Apple 'down the shitter'. David Osborne reports from San Francisco.

Mr Jobs, who has said he will only hold the title at Apple until a permanent CEO can be recruited later this year, offered an upbeat assessment of the struggling company's future to an automatically sympathetic audience of desk top publishers at the Seybold Convention in San Francisco.

Dressed casually and drinking from bottled water, Mr Jobs showcased Apple's new advertising campaign, featuring icons of innovation ranging from Gandhi to Richard Branson, and promised a new array of products without offering specific details on any of them. Saying that he had identified about 30 per cent of Apple products as "germs" worth pursuing, he said: "The products we have coming are going to be a lot, lot better."

He pledged, however, to remain committed to the existing MAC OS operating system and said the company was re-focusing its commitment on two areas where its market share remains at least relatively strong: publishing and design and education.

Mr Jobs also repeated his commitment to the new alliance formed earlier in the summer with Bill Gates of Microsoft, who had previously represented "Boelzebub" to most Mac enthusiasts. "I decided that basically we had to normalise relations with Microsoft," he insisted. The audience listened politely, not repeating the boos and cat-calls that met the announcement when it was made at MacWorld in August. Under the deal, Microsoft invested \$150 million in Apple, and Apple promised to include the Microsoft browser as the default browser on its platform.

Implicitly recognising the criticism that showered on him from many quarters after his decision last month to terminate licensing with Apple's three main clone licensees - Power Computing, which he bought, IBM and Motorola - Mr Jobs said he found a "really dangerous situation" on effectively taking control of the company from Gil Amelio who was fired by the board in July.

Because the cost to Apple per licensed unit was running to hundreds of dollars, he said, the company was essentially subsidising each clone Macintosh that went on the market. "I told them that we were going to go broke and that if we went down the shitter then the whole Macintosh ecosystem would go down the shitter."

Efforts made by Apple to negotiate new terms for the licenses to eliminate the effective subsidisation met a brick wall, Jobs said, adding that he was "not happy" that at the terminations. But he added defiantly: "Our pricing has got to make the ecosystem prosper and make sure Apple returns to health and we did what we had to do."

Even among the most diehard of Mac enthusiasts - many of them among the 3,000 audience yesterday - there is still the sober understanding that the once-mighty Apple still has an uphill struggle to regain its footing. The company has lost some \$2bn over two years and has since its world market share drop to almost insignificant levels beneath 3 per cent.

Brought on to the stage to offer support for Jobs and the new board team he also unveiled in the summer, were several CEOs of some of Apple's most important software providers. Among them John Warnock, CEO of Adobe, declared: "They're getting back to basics and they're looking at customers again. That is very, very refreshing." One of the main criticisms aimed at Mr Amelio was that he had no feel for customers or for the selling of Apple's image.

It is in an effort to repair that that Jobs a week ago introduced a new advertising campaign for Apple in the US, with 60-second television commercials that bear the new slogan, "Think Different" and feature characters such as Einstein, Picasso and, indeed, Mr Branson.



Richard Branson yesterday at the launch of his Virgin Vie cosmetics range

Photograph: Nicola Furtz

Land Rover inundated with Solihull job enquiries

Land Rover was yesterday inundated with 1,500 job applications in less than eight hours after it advertised 300 vacancies at its Solihull factory in the West Midlands. The company needs the extra staff to cope with production of the new small Land Rover, the Freelander, which goes on sale across Europe in January.

A spokesman said that Land Rover had received 1,500 calls on a special jobs hotline which opened at 7am yesterday morning. Based on past experience, the total number of enquiries would easily exceed 3,000, he added.

Interest in the Freelander has outstripped all expectations since it was unveiled two months ago at the Frankfurt Motor Show with Land Rover dealers having received 10,000 customer enquiries already. Production of the Freelander is expected to reach 55,000 in the first year, of which about 35,000 will be exported. A second shift is being introduced in early December to ensure that Land Rover has enough stocks to meet demand from next year. Once output reaches its peak rate, about 2,000 people will be working on the Freelander production out of a total of 12,000 employed on the Solihull site.

The workforce has risen by 2,500 in the last three years to cope demand for Land Rover's other models, the Defender, Discovery and Range Rover. Production of the Defender is running at record levels whilst double shifts have also been introduced on the Discovery and Range Rover lines.

Ian Robertson, Land Rover's managing director, said: "We did not expect to announce the introduction of a night shift on Freelander production at such an early stage." But he said the level of interest had been "incredible". Total Land Rover output this year is set to reach 130,000 rising to 180,000 in 1998. Land Rover has the capacity to double production of the Freelander to 100,000 if demand is sufficient.

BMW, Rover's German parent company has invested more than £200m in the Freelander as part of a £3bn investment programme for the group. Land Rover is already profitable but BMW expects the whole Rover group to start showing profits by 2000.

— Michael Harrison

Directors still buying their own shares

Directors continued to back their own companies by buying shares in September, taking advantage of the gloom surrounding smaller stocks and exporters throughout the summer. Tom Stevenson reports.

Directors continued to be net buyers of shares in their own companies in September, although the ratio of buyers to sellers slipped from the record levels reached earlier in the summer. The keenest buyers last month were directors of exporting companies, which stood to benefit from the decline from its peak in the value of sterling.

According to Directus, an Edinburgh-based company that tracks trading in

shares by directors, exporters and small capitalisation companies were most in demand last month, following heavy underperformance by the market's minnows during the blue-chip bull run so far this year.

The ratio of buyers to sellers in September was 2.8 to 1, compared to 3.7 to 1 in August and 4 to 1 in July.

The statistics chimed with similar numbers from Merrill Lynch earlier in the year, which the broker said underpinned the level of the market. According to Merrill Lynch, the ratio of buyers to sellers rarely rises above 2.5, but when it does shares tend to outperform cash in the subsequent 12 months.

Research going back to 1986 shows that in 16 of the 17 times the ratio rose above 2.5 over the past decade shares subsequently outperformed cash by an average of 15 per cent in the following year.

Distributors and the leisure and hotels

sectors, along with electronic and electrical equipment, were the strongest sectors for directors buying shares, Directus said.

Directors at engineering companies buying shares outnumbered sellers by 22 to six, though the value of the purchases, at £1.3m, was less than the selling total of £1.7m, the research group said.

One of the reasons directors of smaller companies have been such keen buyers of shares in their own businesses has been the marked underperformance of the small shares compared to the FTSE 100 market leaders.

The rise and rise of the market this year has been driven almost exclusively by the top flight and within that by a handful of financial, pharmaceutical and oil stocks. Stripping those out of the FTSE 100 index, the rise of around a third is actually much more pedestrian and the smaller companies have fared even less well.

Maid, the online information company, yesterday more than doubled its size when it snapped up Knight-Ridder Information for \$420m (£261m). As Cathy Newman reports, the move is likely to lead to around 300 redundancies, which represents 20 per cent of the combined workforce.

The newly merged company will start trading as The Dialog Corporation next month, and will be the biggest online information provider in the world with market share a 25 per cent market share, just ahead of Reed International's Lexis-Nexis subsidiary.

Dan Wagner, Maid's ebullient chief executive and founder, who will head up the new company, said yesterday that he was looking

to make cost-savings of \$35m by the end of next year. Mr Wagner said the cuts would involve some "human resource re-allocation".

Sources said 20 per cent of the 1,400 staff in the two businesses were likely to go as part of the streamlining.

KRI, which was sold by the US newspaper publishing giant, Knight-Ridder, owns more than 470 news and information databases. As part of the deal, Dialog has sealed a five-year contract to carry 27 of Knight-Ridder's daily newspapers. One City analyst said the new company's scale would turn Maid into an "immeasurably stronger company", as it would now have access to its own quality content instead of having to buy it in from competitors such as Reuters.

Mr Wagner, who said he had used "aggressive negotiating tactics" to secure the deal, said KRI's turnover had been fairly flat over the last few years because it had

failed to target the "end-user", and had instead depended on the mature library market. "End-users" are individuals without training in information retrieval.

A number of KRI's "key executives" are to join Dialog, Maid said. These include Jeff Galt, KRI's president, who is to take the title of executive vice-president, and will report to Mr Wagner.

Maid said yesterday that a new executive incentive scheme would be introduced, but would not be finalised for some weeks. Mr Wagner's 18 per cent stake in the company will be diluted by about 35 per cent, but he said he had no intention of selling any of his shares.

KRI reported revenues of \$289.8m last year, while Maid turned in a pre-tax loss of £7m. However, Merrill Lynch has pencilled in pre-tax profits of £30m in 1998 for the combined groups.

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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN
EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMADMaid deal has
compelling logic

Dan Wagner, chief executive of Maid, woke up yesterday morning to the heady prospect of running the world's largest online information provider. Mr Wagner has more than doubled his company's size by buying Knight-Ridder Information for \$420m (£261m).

The deal is audacious, but investors should be reassured that key staff, like Jeff Galt, KRI's president, who is joining as Mr Wagner's number two, will provide some continuity and useful customer support skills. The price is also right. Maid could have paid £350m without causing a shareholder revolt.

Most important, though, is the deal's compelling industrial logic. First bigger is better in the online information world, and the enlarged company, to be named The Dialog Corporation, will outstrip Reed International's prestigious Lexis-Nexis brand to take a quarter share of the world market. Size is everything in a world of content with media giants. Reuters recently withdrew the news service it provided to Maid, illustrating the risks of being a weedy player.

Second KRI provides Maid with much-needed quality content and branding. KRI has the largest general reference service in the US, and Europe's largest archival service. Mr Wagner, who prides himself on his tough negotiating tactics, has also sealed a five-year contract with Knight-Ridder Newspapers, KRI's parent, as part of the deal, giving Dialog access to 27 US daily newspapers.

First-class information will complement Maid's user-friendly search technology, InfoSoft, enabling Dialog to target the growing "end-user" market, that is, ordinary individuals who want to access information online.

The deal, to be funded by a combined £118m placing, junk-bond issue, and debt, is expected to be earnings-enhancing in 1998. Maid is hopeful of making cost-savings of around \$35m a year in the first year. Many of KRI's 34 offices will be absorbed by Maid's, although the reorganisation will cost \$10m.

Merrill Lynch had Maid trading on a sky-high 37 times forward earnings, but the broker is tentatively pencilling a better value 14 times for the newly merged company. The shares, sus-

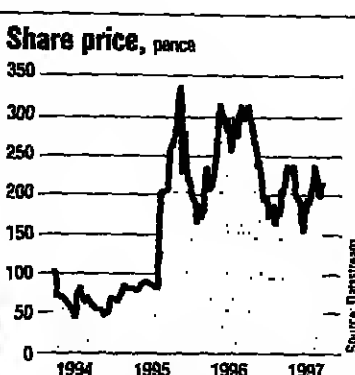
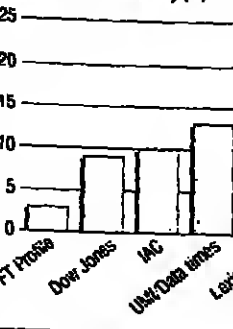
MAID/Dialog: At a glance

(merger of MAID & KRI) Market value: £200.5m, share price 215p (suspended)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998*
Five-year record					
Turnover (£m)	8.9	13.6	21.4	35	250
Pre-tax profits (£m/loss)	1.3	(4.0)	(7.0)	7.0	30
Earnings per share (p/loss)	1.14	(4.42)	(7.82)	5.8	15.8
Dividends per share (p)					

* Merrill Lynch indicative figures

Market shares, (%)



ended yesterday, start trading as Dialog next month. Merrill reckons they will debut at around 220p, but they look set to leap soon afterwards. Buy when you can.

Costly sweetener
from Care First

Care First's decision yesterday to shell out £7m buying back its own shares looks more about sweetening disenchanted shareholders than sensible financial engineering. Not surprisingly Keith Bradshaw, chairman of the nursing home company, is desperate to please after his unwillingness to cede power drove out Chai Patel, his new and well-regarded chief executive.

The buy-back of 4 per cent of its shares at 102p did nudge Care First's value 1p higher to 99p, but that hardly compensates for 75 per cent underperformance in the stock over five years.

Though the tough nursing home sector is partly to blame, Mr Bradshaw and his fellow directors have made some appalling business-decisions which have destroyed shareholder

value. Until just a year ago, the group's policy was to build single-story nursing homes on huge sites. That massively pushed up land costs just when falling occupancy was depressing profits.

And Care First's insistence on building basic rooms without en-suite toilets encouraged snuffy purchasers to shop elsewhere. So although turnover has more than quadrupled in five years, earnings per share and fees per bed have actually fallen, even after merging with the more profitable operators, Greenacre and Court Cavendish. Mr Patel's company bought last year.

All the buy-back does is raise gearing higher - to over 100 per cent on some estimates - and strain already thin interest cover. True, Care First's recent decision (better late than never) to stop building new homes will boost cash and profits short term. But for real growth, this company needs new management to take it into fresh, higher margin areas like home care and psychiatry. Just, in fact, what Mr Patel was starting to do.

Until it resolves these problems, Care First's shares look dead in the water, particularly given the likelihood that the group's assets are overvalued. Though its assets are on the books at 140p a share, falling fees per

bed and some £30m needed to spruce up its homes make 65p-70p a share a more realistic level. On 13 times this year's earnings, avoid.

United Assurance
has more to do

Until yesterday, shareholder confidence in the management of United Assurance, the life company, looked distinctly shaky. It has taken a long time to deliver on a promise that shareholders, not policyholders, would benefit most from £37m of cost savings following United's merger with Refuge Assurance last October. Unwisely, United has also been trying to take itself outside its core business of door-to-door premium collection into more upmarket direct selling. The vehicle set up for this, United Financial Planning, has been consistently loss-making.

United may now have partly appeased its critics. The group yesterday said that the Department of Trade had agreed to proposals to shift back office staff into a shareholder-owned company, allowing shareholders to benefit from cost-cutting. The group has also bowed to market pressure and yesterday said it was selling its financial planning arm to Friends Provident and refocusing on its core business.

However the market was justified in marking United's shares down 22p to 491.5p. While most new business in the life sector has grown by at least 10 per cent this year, United's new business in the six months to June fell sharply - by 5 per cent. Group chief executive George Mack puts this down to an absence of the feel-good factor among United's low-income customers.

This explanation does not wash. Other companies in the home service market, like Britannic, have seen new premiums rise sharply, filling a gap left by the Prudential, which has abandoned home service.

With United's price at only a small premium to its embedded value of 455p per share, even a modest growth in anticipated sales would make the shares look cheap. But Mr Mack predicts poor sales for the next half as the group closes 160 of its 279 branches. The top of the impatient.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



A former director of Courtaulds has just won the accolade of running the Best Pub in Britain. Graeme Jameson and his wife Anne have been licensed of the Wykeham Arms in Winchester for the last 13 years, and yesterday the 1998 Good Pub Guide named "the Wyk" as the best boozer in the country.

The pub has already won plaudits from Michelin, Egon Ronay and the Good Hotel Guide. Mr Jameson said: "We started off knowing nothing at all about running a pub, and to reach this pinnacle of recognition is beyond my wildest dreams."

Whilst not in the Courtaulds league, the Wykeham is a larger business than you might think, with turnover of £1.4m including 70,000 meals, 30,000 bottles of wine and a mighty 200,000 pints of beer.

The bigwigs of the CBI are being booted out of their Centre Point head office in central London next Monday. The landmark Sixties tower block is undergoing a complete refurbishment, which means director general Adair Turner and his cohorts will have to make do with just two floors instead of their usual seven. Council meetings and the like will have to be held elsewhere at a venue yet to be decided. The Barbican in the City is in pole position, I hear.

The tarring up will be finished in April next year. Till then it represents just one more upheaval to be handled by the CBI's president, Colin Marshall. Our Colin is also, lest we forget, deputy chairman of BT, a company much in the news at the moment, as well as chairman of In-cube and British Airways.

NM Rothschild corporate financier Christian Schosland, 31, is leaving to join the City PR firm Citigate's BioCommunications unit, run by Miranda Kavanagh. At Citigate Mr Schosland, a specialist in floating biotech companies, will be shifting his attention to promoting deals rather than actually doing them.

By joining the firm Mr Schosland will be travelling in the opposite direction of Stephen Ewing, who recently left Citigate to join brokers Panmure Gordon, to become an analyst.

Other moves recently include pharmaceuticals analyst Ian White, a former Kleinwort Benson bod, who has left Robert Fleming together with his deputy Sash Klair to join TT International. TT is a London-based fund management company founded by Tim Tachl, an investment guru in health care who used to work for Fidelity.

And then there's drugs analyst Tom Geimer, who left Henry Cooke Lumsden three months ago to join the corporate finance side of Apex Securities in Manchester.

Mr Geimer, a native of the US who settled over here "many years ago," can still not get his head around "soccer," as he calls it. Which is a pity, since Apex has been heavily involved in financing football clubs like Leicester, Millwall and Sheffield United. The game "makes no sense to me," he murmurs.

While the fevered negotiations over the proposed merger between global accountancy firms Coopers & Lybrand and Price Waterhouse go on in smoke-filled rooms across the planet, one particular sticking point has turned up in the UK. The insolvent people at Price Waterhouse are still in the process of suing Coopers & Lybrand over the latter's role as Robert Maxwell's auditors.

PW were appointed administrators to Maxwell Communication Corporation (MCC) in December 1991. Since then insolvency partners including Mark Homan and Jonathan Phillips have worked mightily to sort out the Anglo-American group in the interests of creditors, and in the process have launched legal action against the auditors of MCC, Coopers.

Lawyers working on behalf of the merger say they are working to find a way around this obstacle. They probably will. After all, the Big Six accountancy firms have suffered from being auditors of one big corporate casualty or another during the recent recession. Ian Brindle, senior partner of PW, still has the shadow of BCCI hanging over him.

The corrupt bank, which operated in 62 countries and was shut down six years ago by regulators after years of massive fraud, was audited by PW. BCCI's liquidators Deloitte & Touche duly sued PW.

Still, Deloitte & Touche aren't merging with Coopers - yet.

Andrew Parry, a former pension fund manager with Barings and Lazard, is joining Julius Baer Investments in London as their director of equities. He will be responsible for the firm's specialist European and international equity products.

Mr Parry will report to Jonathan Minter, Julius Baer's managing director in London. Mr Minter said yesterday: "Whilst we were disappointed that our first director of equities, Jon Skeath, decided after 10 years with us to switch from investment management to research, we are exceptionally pleased to have attracted the skills and experience of Andrew Parry."

Mr Minter continued: "We are seeking to continue to grow our specialist equity business which now has a commendable track record and Andrew will provide added momentum to our strategic plans."

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
USA	100.00		
Australia	2.214	2.210	
Canada	0.658	0.658	
Denmark	10.31	10.28	
EU	163.95	163.95	
France	6.554	6.554	
Germany	2.364	2.364	
Greece	15.24	15.24	
Hong Kong	7.757	7.757	
India	47.82	47.82	
Japan	109.09	109.09	
Malaysia	3.765	3.765	
Netherlands	2.364	2.364	
New Zealand	2.310	2.310	
Norway	11.86	11.86	
Portugal	20.21	20.21	
South Africa	6.040	6.040	
South Korea	7.757	7.757	
Spain	16.70	16.70	
Sweden	8.231	8.231	
Switzerland	2.364	2.364	
UK	1.000		

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	Dollar
Argentina	16.94	100.00
Brazil	1.712	100.00
China	8.270	100.00
Czech Rep	53.66	100.00
Denmark	10.31	100.00
EU	163.95	100.00
France	6.554	100.00
Germany	2.364	100.00
Greece	15.24	100.00
Hong Kong	7.757	100.00
India	47.82	100.00
Japan	109.09	100.00
Malaysia	3.765	100.00
Netherlands	2.364	100.00
New Zealand	2.310	100.00
Norway	11.86	100.00
Portugal	20.21	100.00
South Africa	6.040	100.00
South Korea	7.757	100.00
Spain	16.70	100.00
Sweden	8.231	100.00
Switzerland	2.364	100.00
UK	1.000	100.00

Interest Rates

UK		Germany		US		Japan	
Base	720%	Discount	250%	Prime	850%	Discount	505%
France		Lombard		Discount	500%	Belgium	
Italy	30%	Canada	525%	Real Funds	556%	Denmark	280%
Spain		Prime	505%	Spain		Central	500%
Sweden	825%	Prime	375%	Sweden	525%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Real Funds		Lombard	
Switzerland	300%	Discount	225%	Repo(Av)	40%	Lombard	338%

Bond Yields								
Country	2 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	3 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	485	000	455	-005	480	004	555	-003
Belgium	380	003	357	001	430	-001	480	005
Canada	541	000	506	000	450	001	505	001
ECU	455	001	453	000	447	004	509	001
France	000	000	362	000	398	-002	472	002
Germany	541	000	513	000	445	001	492	001
Italy	522	003	556	001	565	003	601	-001
Japan	043	-001	049	000	057	000	120	001
Netherlands	541	000	513	000	445	001	492	001
Spain	491	001	485	002	477	000	519	002
Sweden	431	002	424	003	478	000	546	002
Switzerland	589	001	551	001	571	000	644	001
UK	505	000	559	001	591	001	640	001
US	482	005	502	001	531	-003	586	004

Alexander
grapples with
faded glory

There is chaos in the coaching structure – a year after the Olympics there still is not a national team manager, and players young and established are increasingly resorting to training abroad.

However, Alexander will scarcely have time to watch him, for the task facing her is daunting. Every area needs se-



Photograph: Robert Hallam

And with just two years to go before Britain's greatest judo showcase - the World

specialised coaches, she also wants to set up a players' council, so that the voice of the

chairman, George Kerr, spent considerable time on Britain's international standing - which

And she is not afraid to grasp the nettle. "The success of the 1999 World Champi-

If she fails, it is in danger of becoming as peripheral as British wrestling.

Australia signs coach linked to drug abuse

Australia has been a strong critic of drug use in sport, particularly in swimming, but also recently in athletics.

NHL 98

Beyond belief

"There is The Stanley Cup".



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Referee upsets dawdling Ballesteros

As Gray is probably the

Langer, considered one of

— John Oakley

Brown's return inspires the champions

There is also good news for the England coach, Maggie Souyave, in the return to fitness of Lucy Cope, who missed almost last season. The 22-year-old Great Britain and England defender is currently playing a very prominent role in Slough's midfield.

The greatest danger to Slough's record will come from the former international Tammy Miller, whose scheming and making is capable of

provide stability. It worked with a 4-2 victory away to Sunderland Bedans.

Draw date: 1/11/97. The winning numbers: 6, 12, 17, 25, 28, 49. Bonus number: 25.
Total Sales: \$29,091,272. Prize Fund: \$13,775,194 (45% of ticket sales plus \$654,800 Superdraw funding).

CATEGORY	NO. OF WINNERS	AMOUNT FOR EACH WINNER	TOTAL EACH TIER
Match 6 (Jackpot)	3	\$13,650,807	\$5,000,001
Match 5 plus bonus ball	19	\$70,218	\$1,334,104
Match 5	403	\$2,089	\$839,807
Match 4	23,700	\$77	\$1,824,800
Match 3	478,284	\$10	\$4,782,840
TOTALS	499,403		\$13,745,652

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FOOTBALL: CHAMPIONS' LEAGUE

Ferguson frets over perennial problem

Alex Ferguson yesterday received the plaudits of his peers for his team's brilliant display against Juventus, but at yesterday's first official gathering of football coaches Glenn Moore found the Manchester United manager with much on his mind.

Win or lose he would have been there but there was a special pleasure for Alex Ferguson in taking the acclaim of his peers at the Football Association's first official gathering of coaches yesterday.

One by one they paid tribute to Manchester United's thrilling 3-2 win over Juventus on Wednesday night - Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, Jimmy Armfield, the FA's special advisor, Gerhard Houllier, France's technical director and Howard Wilkinson, his English counterpart. Even the representative from Fifa, football's world governing body, had a word of praise.

But there were also two shadows on the horizon. The more immediate concerned Roy Keane's cruciate ligament injury which will keep him out of the game until next season at the earliest. The other was the perennial problem of fixture congestion.

Ferguson said there will be no immediate rush to replace Keane, since they cannot play a new signing in Europe until after Christmas, and the completion of the Champions' League stage, there is no point. The remaining players - who beat Juventus without Keane - look capable of maintaining United's domestic campaign well enough for the time being.

Much, though, will rest on the continued fitness of Nicky Butt and Ronny Johnsen. After a difficult start the Norwegian did well to largely contain the threat of Zinedine Zidane. "I was very pleased with the tactical discipline the midfield showed," Ferguson said. "That is something we learned from last season. You can talk about Dortmund's goal being deflected but it was a bad goal to give away because our midfield was strung out. You must have cover in central midfield all the time and I was pleased we always had two in there even when we were attacking."

Now, however, Ferguson said he had to bring the team down then build them up to play against Crystal Palace tomorrow. And so it will continue, Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday throughout the season.

"At present," Ferguson said, "we

are scheduled to play Aston Villa on the Monday of the European semi-finals second-leg week (April 13, Easter Monday). If either of us get there we obviously won't play the game but it will be hard to rearrange it. So we are trying to bring the game forward but we simply cannot find a date.

"We could play as we did last night, and Newcastle against Barcelona, but you can't do it all the time and it is one thing to play with that intensity in October but another entirely to do it in April."

The problem was put into sharp relief when Houllier explained how, in France, clubs never play more than two games between European legs. Thus, while Aston Villa faced Liverpool last midweek, then Sheffield Wednesday on Saturday, their Uefa Cup opponents had one match which they were able to bring forward to last Friday. In the event Villa won but it was mighty close; Arsenal and Leicester did not.

"It is for the good of everyone," Houllier said. "The more clubs progress, the higher the Uefa ranking, the more clubs can enter the Uefa Cup and the more interest there is in going for those places." Since the French brought in the change, their success in Europe has gone from winning 27 per cent of fixtures to 50 per cent.

The problem is clubs who see little further than self-interest. More Premiership clubs fear relegation then entertain serious hopes of European glory and, understandably, they will thus not countenance a reduction in numbers.

"I don't think any English club can again dominate the European Cup the way Liverpool did, there is too much competition from the Italians, the French, and others. But English clubs can win it. England has some of the best young players in Europe."

Several of them play for United and England and, with an eye on England's World Cup tie in Rome on 11 October, Hoddle said: "I'd like to congratulate Alex on a magnificent performance and result. The first part of the England-Italy battle is over with. This has set us up nicely for next week."

Ferguson responded: "There is nothing to be afraid of. Glenn has built a good unit with good young players. England will need good defending. It will be a tough night physically, tactically and ability-wise. Italian football is very aggressive, defenders defend as if they mean it but there has to be a belief in what England will try and achieve in Rome. I think they will do it. I am one of the few who always have."

Dortmund return to form

The European champions, Borussia Dortmund, shook off a looming crisis with perfect timing by outclassing Sparta Prague 4-1 on Wednesday in a match reminiscent of last season's feats.

With two goals from the Swiss striker Stéphane Chapuisat and one apiece from Heiko Herrlich and Jörg Heinrich, the German side showed the kind of class which helped them upset mighty Juventus 3-1 in last

May's final. However, back home, Dortmund have slumped to a poor 12th place in the 18-team Bundesliga after a 3-2 home defeat by 1860 Munich last weekend.

"I just can't explain what happened," said Borussia's new Italian coach, Nevio Scala, who was reported to be at risk of losing his job. "We had played badly in our last four matches and, all of a sudden, we played brilliantly."

Coaching revolution the name of the game

The coaching aristocracy, including Glenn Hoddle and Alex Ferguson, were wheeled out yesterday in Birmingham to launch an initiative aimed at improving the game in this country. Guy Hodgson reports.

If nothing else the Football Association is learning the art of presentation. Ten years ago the launch of a coach's association would have merited a small note in a newsletter if it was trumpeted at all.

Yesterday, at Birmingham's International Conference Centre, it got the full monty. A screen at least 20ft high and quadraphonic sound boomed out the message: football teaching in England is going to be revolutionised. But what impressed was the speakers the FA had got to mouth the words. Not just anyone but Alex Ferguson, Glenn Hoddle,

Howard Wilkinson and France's Gerard Houllier. The most blueblooded of the coaching aristocracy had been wheeled out.

The evidence suggested they needed to be. Wilkinson, the FA's technical director and author of "Charter For Quality" in which the newly created Football Association's Coaches Association is an integral part, showed the findings of a report by Lancaster Gate's International Committee in big Odeon-sized letters. Standards must improve, the gist said.

These were not the outcome of Wilkinson's investigations, however, but of Walter Winterbottom in the aftermath of England's first major football fiasco, losing to the United States in the 1950 World Cup. The fact that yesterday's inaugural meeting of the FACA was held at all showed how much notice had been taken.

Hoddle, the England coach and one of the finest natural talents this country has produced in the last 30 years,

plucked a personal example of what had gone wrong in the past. "I remember when I was young," he told a audience of 1,500. "I did something and was told 'you don't do that'." It was about playing off the front foot, using the outside of the foot. It's something that stayed with me and something I took into coaching. If a lad can play with the outside of his foot he should be encouraged."

"We have underestimated our achievements at club and international level for the last 30 years. I say that because of the structure we have had to work under. We need to be with boys of a younger age. We need to change."

In Hoddle's perfect world young boys would play on smaller pitches in games of less than 11-a-side in an atmosphere that places more emphasis on learning than winning.

"We need to take the competitive edge from young players, coaches and parents," he said, "it's not with all costs at that age."

"The important thing is to get quality time with these players. Time to practice and time to develop techniques."

"Competitiveness is there anyway. It's natural. You can see that when kids play conkers in the schoolyard."

Time, it was a recurring theme in Birmingham. Houllier, the former coach of Paris St Germain and the French national side and now Wilkinson's equivalent over the channel, spelled out how a coaching revolution had turned his country from an international joke into one of the powerhouses of Europe.

France's football structure was reorganised in the 70s and 80s to produce players like Eric Cantona, Didier Deschamps and Zinedine Zidane.

In turn, French clubs have turned a hopeless record of four European finals and no cups between 1955 and 1989 into two titles and five finalists in the last seven seasons. This despite currently exporting 17 top players to leading

foreign clubs. A figure that far outweighs England's negligible sum.

Houllier also revealed how each club's youth schemes had been graded with the better ones being rewarded by having extra rights when it came to signing and retaining young players.

He said: "The ones which are not so good are only allowed to sign players for one year. This is because we want our best young players learning at the best centres with the best teachers."

Wilkinson said: "To change the saying of the Jesuits," he said, "Give me a boy when he's seven and I will give you a player. If we do that properly we won't go far wrong."

Fences for World Cup criticised

The Football Supporters' Association yesterday said that the French government's decision to keep security fences at World Cup venues was "very disappointing".

The FSA's Premier League representative, Sam Johnstone, said: "Fencing was responsible for the tragedy at Hillsborough in 1989. Fencing was put around grounds in the 1970s and it has led to disasters from Sheffield to Guatemala."

"It looks as though the French Government are ignoring the wishes of Fifa [the governing body of world football]... Fifa are only allowing all-seater stadia to stage major international tournaments - but 'no fencing' should also be top of their list. We've had full backing from Fifa and a lot of people will be campaigning against this."

Alain Cheneau, head of security at Lens Football Stadium, said: "Anyone that I know who is responsible for security is against having fencing."

Asprilla out for a month

By overturning a two-goal deficit in the cauldron of Dynamo Kiev's Olympiski Stadium, Newcastle proved that they are a credible force in Europe at last.

However, as Carl Little explains, parity was achieved at a high price: injuries to Asprilla and Lee leave the Magpies further depleted.

Faustino Asprilla is facing surgery on a groin injury which will rule him out of the Newcastle side for at least a month. The Colombian injured himself as he lost his balance, after taking a 25th-minute free-kick during the 2-2 draw against Dynamo Kiev on Wednesday.

If Asprilla has snapped a groin muscle he will be out for at least a month, possibly more. Another blow for Newcastle - and England, too - was the recurrence of Robert Lee's thigh muscle strain, which could see him struggle to recover in time for the World Cup qualifier in Italy on 11 October.

Asprilla was seen yesterday by a groin specialist in London and it is likely that he will follow his teammates Alan Shearer and Darren Peacock in undergoing surgery.

Without the injured Shearer and Asprilla it seems likely the Newcastle manager, Kenny Dalglish, will have to look for a new striker, although Ian Rush is capable of filling the attacking role in the short term.

Newcastle recovered from a two-goal deficit to earn a draw, and although John Beresford scored the first goal and saw his shot deflected in for the second, Dalglish also praised the goalkeeper Shay Given for keeping the Magpies in the game.

Dalglish said: "I know how good he is; he has never had to prove himself to me. His second half show was excellent; he kept us in it during one of the rare periods of Kiev pressure in the second half."

"I would like to think we will do better defensively in future games but, for most of the second half, it was us who were in control even though they were still dangerous."

Beresford feels the Magpies can only get better. "We are gaining confidence all the time. You've just got to look at what Croatia Zagreb [who were beaten by Newcastle in the qualifying round at the start of the season] did on Tuesday night. They beat Grasshoppers 5-0 away from home. I don't really think we've got the credit we deserved in getting through by beating them. It was a great stepping stone and set us up for the League stage."

He added: "When you are away at a team as good as Kiev and you can come back from two-goals down at half-time and get a result we've got to be more than happy."

"We are not going to get carried away with the result in Kiev - I think it is going to be tough at St James Park - but if we keep going the way we are we shouldn't have too many problems. I think the point in Kiev could prove crucial and I believe it is going to be tough for the other two sides in our group to be able to go there and get a result."

NON-LEAGUE NOTEBOOK

Wealdstone seek higher things

The first qualifying round of the FA Vase does not normally produce the tournament's two Wembley finalists, but there is a chance it may do so this year.

No fewer than 316 teams will be on the Wembley trail in the Vase this weekend. Many of them are little more than village sides but among the likes of Blidworth Miners' Welfare, West Allotment Celtic and Kinthrup Rangers are two clubs who aspire to higher things.

Wealdstone were once the best non-League club in the land. They won the double of what is now the GM Vauxhall Conference and the FA Trophy in 1985 but in recent years their fortunes have slumped. They are now in the Second Division of the Isthmian League and thus have to compete in the Vase, in which they travel to Harefield tomorrow, rather than the Trophy.

Braintree Town, like

Wealdstone, chose to switch across the non-League pyramid from the Southern to the Isthmian League in order to reduce travelling costs. They won promotion from the Third Division at the first attempt last term and are now well-placed in the Second. With a strong squad containing several former Colchester United professionals, Braintree have plenty of experience and are widely tipped to go all the way in the Vase. They entertain Swaffham Town tomorrow. The other favourites for the Vase do not enter the tournament until the second round proper. Among them are several sides with Wembley experience, including Tiverton Town, who thrashed Wimborne 11-1 in the FA Cup last weekend. The Devon side's record in the Screwfix Direct League reads played seven, won seven, scored 31, conceded one.

- Rupert Metcalf



Ryan Giggs, scorer of Manchester United's third goal, rises above the Juventus defender Alessandro Birindelli (top); Newcastle United's Faustino Asprilla takes on the Dynamo Kiev defence before suffering a groin injury Photographs: Reuters

Champions' League										
Group A										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Borussia Dortmund	2	2	0	0	6	1	6			
Parma	1	1	1	0	4	0	4			
Sparta Prague	0	0	1	1	1	4	1			
Galatasaray	0	0	0	2	0	5	0			
Group B										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Manchester Utd	1	1	0	0	3	2	3			
Juventus	1	1	0	0	2	4	3			
Freiburg	0	0	0	2	3	5	0			
Kosova	0	0	0	2	0	5	0			
Group C										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Dynamo Kiev	1	1	0	0	3	2	3			
Newcastle Utd	1	1	0	0	3	2	3			
Barcelona	0	0	1	1	1	4	1			
PSV Eindhoven	0	0	0	2	2	5	0			
Group D										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Real Madrid	1	1	0	0	6	1	3			
Lombard	1	1	0	0	3	3	3			
Olympique	0	0	0	2	1	5	0			
Porto	0	0	0	2	0	5	0			
Group E										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Bayer Muench	1	1	0	0	3	1	3			
Paris St-Germain	1	1	0	0	3	1	3			
Real Sociedad	0	0	0	2	1	4	0			
IFK Gothenburg	0	0	0	2	1	4	0			
Group F										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Spartan Union	1	1	0	0	3	2	3			
Wolves	1	1	0	0	3	2	3			
Luton	0	0	0	2	1	4	0			
Remaining fixtures in English clubs' groups:										
Group B: 26 Oct Manchester Utd v Feyenoord, 2 Nov Juventus v Lazio, 9 Nov Manchester Utd v Lazio, 10 Nov Juventus v Lazio, 10 Dec Manchester Utd v Lazio, 11 Dec Juventus v Lazio, 11 Dec Manchester Utd v Lazio, 12 Dec Juventus v Lazio, 12 Dec Manchester Utd v Lazio										



FOOTBALL

Keane's knee injury robs United of key man in the middle

The champions of England will have to do without the man who makes their midfield tick for the rest of the season. Roy Keane's cruciate ligament injury is bad news for both Manchester United and the Republic of Ireland, as Rupert Metcalf reports.

They may be celebrating Wednesday's famous Champions' League victory over Juventus, but there was plenty of gloom at Old Trafford yesterday. Roy Keane, their inspirational captain, will have a cruciate ligament operation within the next month which will rule him out until at least the start of next season.

Keane was injured during last Saturday's game at Leeds - he hurt himself trying to tackle Alf-Inge Haland. A spokesman for the Old Trafford club said: "He had an exploratory operation on Monday, when a small piece of cartilage was removed, and it was discovered that he would also require a cruciate ligament operation."

"That will be performed in approximately four weeks,

when the swelling has gone down. He will be out for the rest of the season." Keane will also miss the Republic of Ireland's crucial World Cup qualifier against Romania tomorrow week - and almost certainly the finals if the Irish qualify for France via the play-offs.

"I'm not even thinking about Roy now for the play-offs or the World Cup finals proper," Mick McCarthy, the Republic's manager, said. "We've still got to get to France and without Roy it will make it doubly harder for us in the play-offs - whoever we are drawn against." McCarthy has already lost the striker Niall Quinn with a similar injury.

In the same situation as Keane is his former Old Trafford team-mate, Lee Sharpe. Leeds United's record signing will not play again this season after damaging anterior cruciate ligaments in his knee in a pre-season friendly on 2 August.

The 26-year-old former England international, who joined Leeds from Manchester United for £4m last summer, will undergo surgery on the knee next Wednesday. It had been initially hoped that the injury would clear up, but a specialist yesterday ruled that surgery was required.

Bolton Wanderers yesterday

completed the club-record signing of the Wimbledon striker Dean Holdsworth for £3.5m. The 28-year-old had also been linked with West Ham and Middlesbrough, but he chose to go to the Reebok Stadium - which could mean Bolton allowing Peter Beardsley to join his former England colleagues, Ray Wilkins and Kevin Keegan, at Fulham.

Tottenham have ended their interest in the Bolton midfielder Alan Thompson as their injury crisis finally shows signs of ending. Among those returning to fitness is the England forward Darren Anderton, who is back in training and is set to start his latest comeback in the reserves next week.

Steffen Iversen, the £2.6m striker Francis bought from Rosenborg Trondheim last season, is out for another four weeks with the ankle he injured while playing, against Spurs' wishes, for Norway. He is the only senior forward still on the long-term injury list.

Sheffield Wednesday have completed the £300,000 signing of the Norwegian international midfielder Petter Rudi from Molde. The 23-year-old has signed a three-and-a-half year contract at Hillsborough.

Ferguson frets, page 30
Financial news, page 24



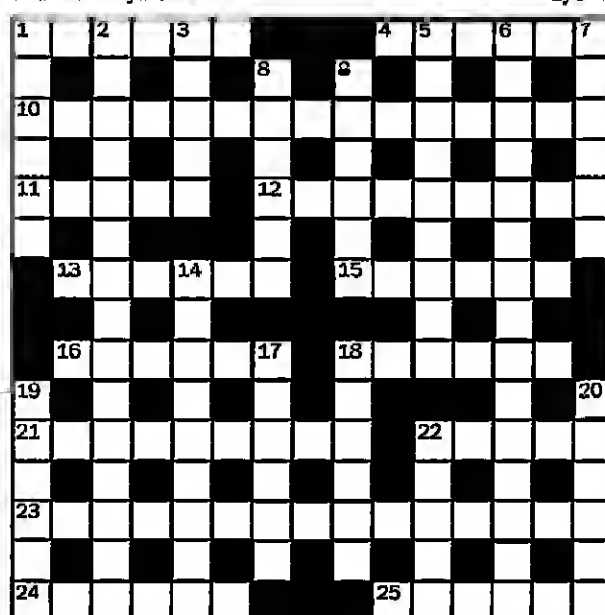
Nigel Martyn and Alf-Inge Haland, of Leeds United, stand over Roy Keane after the Manchester United captain suffered his cruciate ligament injury at Elland Road on Saturday. Keane will have an operation in the next month and will be out for the rest of the season. Photograph: Emrys

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3428, Friday 3 October

By Phil

Thursday's solution



1 SCARAB 2 STRAIT 3 TIT 4 URBAN 5 ATOM 6 REPERISAL 7 TRITION 8 RED 9 ABC 10 STRAIGHT 11 FLUSHES 12 VICT 13 S 14 DIAGNOSIS 15 RIPPY 16 SHEEP 17 BIBLICAL 18 A 19 E 20 U 21 W 22 C 23 COUNTER 24 TRITANT 25 K 26 M 27 E 28 S 29 N 30 T 31 I 32 D 33 SUB 34 B 35 L 36 E 37 G 38 L 39 A 40 T 41 I 42 N 43 G 44 E 45 R 46 T 47 U 48 R 49 B 50 A 51 N 52 A 53 S 54 T 55 E 56 R 57 N

- ACROSS**
- Pick's mostly to back frozen stuff (6)
 - Take ages to be pertinent (6)
 - Homework? Reacting to study badly (7, 8)
 - Suggest box should lose lid (5)
 - Unexpectedly appealing tip (9)
 - Cold, cold and mountainous (6)
 - Make start on course with first of tutors away (3, 3)
 - Bolt behind soft shrub (6)
 - Chesty upset - an indication of Death? (6)
 - Not honoured, not decorated, not invested (9)
 - Artist depicting common railway (5)
- DOWN**
- Interrupts rudely and causes ripples? (6, 4, 3, 2)
 - Guided to absorb information from story (6)
 - Might light appear as a distress signal? (6)
 - Bats resident in time-piece? (6)
 - Not in contention, having no speed left? (3, 2, 3, 7)
 - Cleaner goes round one item of furniture (5)
 - It's accepted by English roughly in a knowledgeable way (9)
 - Happy being in pole position? (2, 3, 2, 3, 5)
 - Hot waterspot dissipating energy without new source of steam (6)
 - Half-heartedly tamper with last of cheery group of tunes (6)
 - For nobleman, Garter's foremost - fancy being upset about that! (6)
 - Symbol of affection is nothing to a man (4-5)
 - Young chap supporting workers' organisation in US city (6)
 - Chap shown the way walked oddly (6)
 - Shellfish or beef, we hear (6)
 - Dorothy, losing heart, carried by desires, turning up in city in Oz (6)
 - Scrubber a twerp picked up (5)

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BOXING

Collins announces his retirement

Steve Collins, the World Boxing Organisation super-middleweight champion, yesterday announced his retirement from boxing. The Irishman, who had pulled out of his title defence against Joe Calzaghe which was due to take place in Sheffield on Saturday week, made the announcement at the British Boxing Awards ceremony in Bloomsbury, central London.

Collins, accepting the award for Best Overseas Boxer, said: "I don't have the motivation that I once had."

"My only way to carry on was to fight Roy Jones, the WBC [World Boxing Council] light heavyweight champion, but as there is no chance of that happening now, the only route I have is to retire."

"As a super-middleweight, it was a very exciting time with the likes of Mike McCallum, Gerald McClellan, James Toney, Michael Watson, Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank."

"I believed I was the best of that group, and with my two world title wins over Benn and Eubank I proved it."

Collins, nicknamed "Celtic Warrior", added: "I would like to thank the British fans for supporting me and promoter Frank Warren, who gave me the chance to further my career, which sadly is now over."

Collins revealed that he had been considering retiring from boxing for a while before finally hanging up his gloves yesterday afternoon. The Irishman said: "It's something I've been thinking over in my mind for the best part of 12 months."

After announcing his decision to quit he told BBC Radio 5 Live: "If you continue in the game without hunger that's when people lose and get hurt."

"I'm quitting while I'm ahead and I'm happy to have achieved all my ambitions."

"The fight that would have kept me in boxing was against Roy Jones. But he has ducked me for two years, even though Frank Warren, my promoter, did everything to make it happen."

The British Boxing Board of Control secretary, John Morris, believes that the bout between Calzaghe and Collins's replacement, Eubank, will now be for the vacant WBO super-middleweight title - rather than for an interim title.

Following Collins's retirement the championship automatically becomes vacant and Eubank-Calzaghe, which was billed as an interim title fight, is expected to now be for the Irishman's belt.

Morris said: "Ultimately it is up to the WBO to make that decision but as far as I'm concerned, and we at the British Boxing Board of Control are concerned, Chris Eubank and Joe Calzaghe will fight for the vacant title."

The day when Atherton bowled over the French

Michael Atherton, the England captain, led an assortment of Test cricketers to an unlikely victory over the French.

Henry Blofeld, in Reims, witnessed the upset.

While it may not have been a victory to rank with those enjoyed by the England rugby union team at the Parc des Princes in recent years, a win over the French in any circumstances is a treasured moment for any English captain.

For Michael Atherton, whose successes overseas with his England cricketers have been rather limited, it must have been a very special occasion. Atherton was leading a

team of six England players past and present in a friendly match here. If it had been cricket, Atherton's side would no doubt have been favourites, but this was the quintessentially French sport of boules - and the host team included their national captain.

The match had been organised in aid of Atherton's benefit year. His team comprised Graham Gooch, Nasser Hussain, Mark Butcher, John Stephenson and Derek Pringle, the Independent's cricket correspondent.

The outcome of a tight contest rested on a final throw by England's captain. Atherton walked up to the throwing line, his face marked by that characteristic nervous smile, and confidently delivered his final boule. It landed within three inches of the jack to earn his team a famous victory.

Berlin

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